

死にやすい
公爵令嬢2

エーリカ
アウレリア
と
天使の
玄室



瀬尾照
TERASU SENOO

ILLUST
六七質
MUNASHICHI

Duke's Daughter who is Liable to Die and the Seven Nobles

– Shini Yasui Kōshaku Reijō to Nana-ri no Kikōshi –

- Volume 2 -

Erica Aurelia and the Burial Chamber of Angels

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[Starry Night Translation]

「おやおや、こんなところに
女の子を連れ込むなんて、悪い坊やだこと」

バリュー

エーリカ・アウレリア

オーギュスト・イグニシア



「愚かな子……

こんなにも心がボロボロになるまで
思い悩んでしまうなんて。



ああ、それにしても、なんという皮肉。
その心に刻まれた傷故に、
妾たち獸の目には、
お前の魂は
たとえようもなく
美しく映るのだから

クラウス・ハーファン

「そいつを殺したければ、
俺を倒してからにするんだな！」



「おや、気づかなかつた。
眼鏡がズれていたのか。
いつも悪いね、エドアルト」

「相変わらずだね、エルリック」



エドアルト・アウレリア

エルリック・アクトリアス

Chapter 19

Island of Messenger (1)

My name was Erica Aurelia.

A Duke's daughter with blonde vertical rolls, I was a plain and ordinary girl.

Charm point?

If I had to say it, I guessed it was being one step away from the grip of Death...?

—I was in trouble.

Even if I tried to play it on the down low, the damage was not reduced.

Blonde hair with vertical rolls, a Duke's daughter who was overloaded with death flags, in which way was it plain and ordinary?

It was about a month and a half from the incident in the Ruins of Visitor.

I was in the midst of escaping reality while tracing the texture of my working desk.

It was because I got a 'letter of challenge' from Klaus Harvan who was supposed to be my friend.

Why...!?

Even so, as expected from Klaus, the striking power of his letter was high.

Was this a new mental attack type of spell card or something?

It was about time for me to fight against the next death flag.

My willpower was about to be shaved.

If I could turn back the time, I would like to go back when I thought, '*Wah~~, a letter*

from Klaus – I'm happy.'

Past me, do not open the letter, let's put the happy feelings in the cupboard of your heart.

And let's keep the important letter in the back of the drawer... okay?

What about the reply?

It was very hard to reply.

If I replied poorly and he decided to fight me by any chance, not only it would be a danger to my life, but I wouldn't be able to win.

Because he was so strong, you know?

I thought that I could finally make friends, and that it would work out...

[What's wrong, Erica. Are you not eating the meat?]

Oops, I made a friend elsewhere.

I raised my head and turned to my reliable partner.

A lizard-like armor with silhouette of a stuffed toy.

A helmet with a design like a dragon.

Beyond the slit of the eyes, big eyes were blinking rapidly.

A mysterious creature wearing armor who disguised as a star steel golem.

He was my new friend.

An evil spirit that was betrayed by part of my ancestors – the giant sea creature Zaratan was reformed, and became the black dragon Tirnanog.

His new name was quoted from the words engraved on the transfer gate.

The other content of the contract was concerning about wanting a friend, so he decided to have patience with me.

He resented all of Aurelia once, and was planning to kill all of us.

However, knowing that he was not betrayed by his trusted person, he had completely become amicable.

Just now, he was devouring the Harvan specialty dry-cured ham that Ann had sent greedily, and he seemed happy.

Revenge?

What, is it delicious?

Meat is more delicious, he had that kind of feeling.

“No, never mind. Besides that, please give me some.”

I wouldn’t be able to go on living if I was damaged by a communication failure.

Maybe he was just embarrassed.

Let’s eat meat first.

Ah right, if I ate this with the dry-cured ham, it would surely be delicious.

I took some figs from the fruit basket where fruits that were picked this morning were placed.

[Do you eat figs?]

“Yes, what about you?”

I split the fruit with a handy fruit knife and replied while peeling off its skin.

Scraped a slice of meat from the dry-cured ham, and then wrapped the fruit with it.

The dry-cured ham really complimented the fig.

I threw a wrapped fig to Tirnanog who had his mouth open in front of me.

[Oh, ooooh!!!]

“Oh my, is it delicious?”

[It's delicious!]

“Isn't it?”

I also put one in my mouth.

Oh, the saltiness from the plenty oleic acid of the pig and the sweetness of the fig were just right.

The taste of the meat was good, I felt comforted.

If you had delicious meat and true friendship, surely life would feel more fulfilling.

“Well then, have you gotten used to your body now?”

[Well, not bad. It feels rather comfortable.]

“Then, that's good.”

Tirnanog waved his arms wildly while wearing his armor, and made a fine appeal.

The condition of the joints seemed to be good as well.

I was worried whether to increase the range motion a little more, but if it was stable, then it was better not to break the balance by forcibly handling it.

By the way, my dad, an alchemist of Aurelia, was delighted to hear that his daughter was able to make an elaborate golem.

I am sorry... Otoou-sama...

This pseudo-golem was currently eating meat.

I seemed to have deceived you somehow, I apologized.

Apart from that.

By establishing him who was the real culprit of the first scenario ‘The Golden Madness Murder Case’ as an ally, the first death flag was completely avoided.

With this one thing, I understood the details of the evil spirit that were not revealed

in the game, it was a feeling of getting unexpected bargain—
No, no, I had a lot of difficulty with many unexpected factors.

Although he wasn't a human, it was a pleasure to have a friend to confide in.
This made it easier for me to tell him the secret.

[That said, what about the next oracle?]

I thought that it was useless to explain about the whole otome game of my previous life to Tirnanog, so instead I just said '*I received the destiny of destruction as an oracle.*' The degree of incomprehensible things I said didn't change very much, but it wasn't a lie.

"Next is the event with the Prince of the South..."

Auguste, First Prince of Ignitia.

He was famous as the Foolish Prince, so famous to the extent entering the ear of an eight-year-old like me.

It was to the extent that people who had never met him in person were running off at their mouths about it.

He was a person who was a bit pitiful.

By the way, six years in the future, Prince Auguste would be one of the game characters.

Long blonde hair with light brown skin.

With a smile that looked flirty, he was a flashy prince who was always attached to a different girl every time.

But he would not have a deep relationship with anyone, and if you tried to shorten the distance, he would quickly escape.

Although he was a flashy person, the shell of his heart seemed to be overwhelmingly thick.

Prince Auguste was covered with scandals.

This was the second summary of his second scenario 'The St. Angel Anthropophagism Case.'

The stage was crowded due to Holy Angel's holiday; it was the familiar Leandez Magic Academy.

There, the news of the bloody case burst in.

When people came to the chapel which was decorated for the festival, there was a terrible disaster that covered their eyes.

Abundant amount of blood was scattered on the scene of the crime.

In the sea of blood, there were three things, the finger and left ear of a girl, and the left arm of a boy.

The cut off parts were teared to shreds as though they had been bitten by a beast.

From the characteristics of the pieces of human body left behind, it was specified that Prince Auguste and Erica Aurelia were killed.

The mouth of the statue of an angel in the chapel was soaked with blood as if the angel had killed the two of them.

At the murder scene, the heroine Chloe saw the shadow of a huge beast without one arm.

And that night, she met Prince Auguste who was supposed to have been killed.

Simply spoil yourself.

Prince Auguste held a raging inferiority complex.

He was a prince of the Country of the Dragon Knights, but he couldn't ride a dragon.

And, therefore, he was under suspicion of being a child of infidelity.

Regardless of his efforts, only gazes filled with contempt were directed to him.

Unable to endure the pressure, in the end Auguste reached out for a forbidden black magic.

He revived the contract beast of Ignitia's ancestor and integrated himself with that beast.

In exchange of him getting the ability to ride dragons, he stopped being a person.

However, six years later, the beast itself couldn't tolerate the burden of the fusion.

Every evening, the beast would separate itself from the prince and began to walk alone.

Those pitiful victims who unfortunately encountered the starving beast, were being devoured greedily while still alive.

Naturally, the first victim of this beast was the infamous Erica Aurelia.

I really wanted to avoid experiencing this death situation.

Being eaten alive, it was like eating live seafood while still moving, right? Was I a white fish or something?

Oops, my thoughts were disturbed.

There was a person who became the impetus for this Prince-sama to reach out for the forbidden black magic.

Who was it?

Of course, it was me, Erica Aurelia, who was well-known for bringing unnecessary trouble upon myself and suffering the consequences.

Yes, it was also my own doing.

Erica ridiculed Prince Auguste's failure and caused his pride to be in tatters.

Why the original Erica would step through other people's landmines, I would never know.

Incidentally, the causal event should happen in the tournament at the advent of spring.

It was exactly during the time for the Advent Festival¹.

Moreover, it seemed that my father and I were invited to the banquet of the Advent of the royal family.

Our departure to the Kingdom of Ignitia was tomorrow.

Even so, my last ray of hope Eduart-oniisama was absent.

My father seemed to be convinced that he was not investigating a serious thing.

This reaction came back when I told my bosom friend Tirnanog about the sugar-coated version of the development of the game.

[Do they believe in a single god?

With the existence of contract beasts and other things, such an ancestor wouldn't be recognized.]

“Well, that country should be tolerant of pagans, but as expected the pseudo-evil god was related to the royal family.”

[Is it an evil god?]

“God who asked for the blood of a person is not allowed even to the religion which was tolerant of pagans.”

While I did ceremonial occasions in Buddhism and sometimes Shinto, enjoyed myself in faux Christianity events, and I liked temples and shrines, but I was an average Japanese who wasn't interested in religion itself, not even paganism².

At the very least, the being I prayed at was something other than a human.

[That kind of thing is normal for us.]

“He... heeh, are you eating people too?”

[Kukukukukukuku! I am not interested in blood itself! It is human soul that I eat!]

“Heh-..., I didn't know that-...”

I knew that I didn't even want to know.

[Kukukuku! You have to eat the flesh to eat the soul!!!]

“Heh-..., that's amazing-...”

Surely he wanted to talk about such dangerous things for even longer, but I couldn't afford to sacrifice my time for such a thing.

Even so, when he was talking about this kind of thing very excitedly, it was hard for me feel afraid.

I guessed he was free for the first time in hundreds of years, so he would like to do what he likes.

“That's why, may I ask you something, Tir?”

[Umu, what is it?]

“There is something I want you to help me with.”

[Hou. It is a request of an important friend. You can ask me anything.]

Yes, this was something I could only ask him.

Since alchemists were always holding a lot of luggage, I would like to ask a strong friend to hold my bags.

¹ This will be explained in the next chapter, but the Advent here is not the coming of Christ, but the coming of the angel that they revered as a god.

² Most Japanese are atheists, but they go to temples and shrines for New Year or other occasions to pray, and celebrate Christmas.

Chapter 20

Island of Messenger (2)

There were five leather bags in front of me and the Black Dragon Tirnanog.

The size of each one was the trunk size for overseas travel.

They were sturdy and durable bags that were reinforced with metal.

Contents were clothing, shoes, with particular attention to necessities and lots of wands.

“I thought about using goods that could make me win even if I rematched with you as a guide.”

[Is it about the extent that you can win against me without that boy?]

I remembered the last incident in the Ruins of Visitor.

About the Harvan siblings, coping with the traps of the labyrinth, fighting against Zaratan.

That time was a complete mess.

Alchemists couldn't deal with troubles *after* they already happened.

It was in the theory of alchemist that we should be thoroughly prepared before striking.

Even so, situations occurred unpredictably.

If there was no Eduart-oniisama's Wunderkammer or the simple base camp, what would happen to us?

My father, Duke of Aurelia, gave me equipment and magic as a caution for assassination and abduction when traveling for the Advent Festival.

However, what I wanted was a convenient magic that could turn everything around and deal a death blow in the event of emergency.

Of course, I didn't want to get caught up in a predicament if I could.

Although I didn't want to get involved, it was always a nuisance if it jumped me from the other side even if I avoided it.

It would be too late if something had already happened.

Therefore, preparation as much as possible was necessary.

“Thinking that way, after trying hard and packing all the wands I thought I would need, I can't move the bags even if I push or pull them... and I thought that it was already heavy when it was empty.”

[There is nothing impossible. If you want to fight alone, there is no such thing as too many wands.]

“I wonder if you could hold the bags for me?”

[Leave it to me, my friend. Such things, for me they are as light as feathers.]

As soon as he said it, Tirnanog lifted the large bag with one hand.

He was formerly a huge monster.

Even if he was getting smaller, he was strong enough to do the impossible.

It would be a great help if he carried my baggage.

It would be alright if I only brought clothes, but since I got supplies for adventure, it would be impossible to ask the maids.

[Umu, umu. There is no problem with any number if it was only up to this level.]

Tirnanog stacked three leather-covered bags and lifted them lightly.

“How many do you think you can carry? Are you alright? Is it impossible?”

[Hahahaha, are you mocking me?]

Hmm, the small Black Dragon Tirnanog who was sticking out his chest was very adorable.

“That’s not what I mean, you have just revived in this world, so don’t push yourself.”
[Ha! Hilarious! Nothing is impossible, just up to this extent is not even enough for a warm up. My friend. I was supposed to be a big boat.]

Right now, Tirnanog was in his birth size, but when he grew he would become 5 kilometers long.

If I took into consideration that he was a small island much less a big boat, there was no sense of stability.

Before I knew it, Tirnanog was walking with five large travel bags on his head. He seemed to be healthy.

[Hahahahahaha! Light, light!]

“It’s okay to carry them lightly, but be careful not to drop them, okay?”

[I know!]

The preparation was complete.

Even so, the wands, books, and other items crammed in my bags were the things of Eduart-oniisama.

If possible I didn’t want to use them.

No matter how much money I had to return to my older brother, if I used too much, it wouldn’t be enough.

◆◆◆

My father and I, and also the servants, were lining up in front of the Spring Palace’s transfer gate.

The destination was a small city a distance away from the <Island of Messenger> which was the Kingdom of Ignitia.

For national defense reasons, except for emergencies, the transfer gates to go directly to Kingdom of Ignitia were closed.

Therefore, from this small city to the Island of Messenger, it would be a horse-drawn carriage journey for a while.

This city which was visited as a relay point was crowded with people because of the Advent Festival.

Angel statues with swords and eggs were set around the city, both of which were decorated with plenty of flowers.

It seemed that the Advent of the Founder King of Ignitia had been done independently by Harvan and Lucanrant by fusing it with early summer festival.

A slave warrior who was born in the northern region of Karkinos¹ continent was found by an angel.

The slave warrior drove away the vampires, who had dominated Ichthyes at that time, by the power to manipulate dragons given by the angel, and was enthroned as the Founder King of Ignitia.

The Founder King of Ignitia was also called as the Invasion King of Ignitia by the outsiders.

The boy was born on that continent but he became one of the heroes that everyone knew.

The angel at that time became the protagonist in this Advent and their angel figure models were decorated with flowers.

Since Ignitia had such origin, there were two areas which were publicly called as Ignitia.

One was the Ignitia's royal family which occupied the southern region of Ichthyes continent.

The other was on the opposite side of the Ichthyes continent, across the Island of Messenger – the peninsula in the northwest of the southern continent, Karkinos, where the former Ignitia's territory based.

Generally speaking, Ignitia referred to the royal territory of Ignitia and Ignitia's aristocracy around it.

The Island of Messenger was also the royal territory of Ignitia.

The carriage that carried the party from Aurelia gradually moved towards the coastlands.

We turned around the highway along the cape, and when the tall buildings of the city were cut off, the scenery was unfolded at once.

On one side, the cerulean blue sea was spread out.

The high-transparency deep-sea ocean was shining brightly, illuminated by the strong light of the southern country's sun.

Unlike Aurelia's cold sea breeze, hot and humid air stroked my hair.

A pure white castle was built on such a beautiful sea.

If I looked closely, it was both an island and a city.

It was unified with stone buildings whose streets were whitish, and consistent designs were adopted for tall buildings like the royal castle, the cathedral, and the walls.

It was in harmony with the whole island and the royal castle towering at the center of the city, so the island itself was a castle.

And, around the castle, many black shadows with wings were flying around.

Perhaps, those were dragons, not birds?

[Ooh... this is the Island of Messenger, huh. It is quite scenic.]

“Amazing. It looks like a castle is growing from the ocean.”

It was a beautiful island as I was told.

It was said that to be the best view of the royal family.

A single street was drawn in the sea.

From the distance, it looked like a thin bridge.

But as we approached, it turned out to be surprisingly a wide and robust stone construct.

I guessed it was about 10 meters in width.

The surface of the bridge was slightly moist, and some barnacles and other things were growing everywhere.

It seemed that this bridge would submerge about 20 centimeters when the sea was fully at high tide.

Our horse-drawn carriage went forward to the bridge which was submerged in the sea a few hours ago.

There were statues of huge dragons on the gate of the Island of Messenger.

The dragon on the right side was made of marble and the dragon on the left side was made of bronze polished to golden color.

They were the statues of the dragons of the Founder King of Ignitia, the White Dragon Urthona and the Golden Dragon Tharmas.²

From above the statue of Urthona, two dragons as big as horses flew off.

On the back of those girls – the gender of those dragons were unknown, but I called them with female pronouns for convenience sake – were the Ignitia's dragon knights in red military uniform.

To the visitors from each country including Aurelia, the two dragon knights waved their hands.

The dragon knights rose so high that their appearances disappeared with the sunlight and then fell steeply towards the surface of the sea.

The two dragons shifted to level flight with the sea level, their hind legs came in contact with the water.

When the two dragons were going to flew overhead again, their hind legs kicked the water and splashed water drops in the air.

“Wow! Rainbow!”

There was a slight rainbow on the trajectory where the two dragons flew in an arch shape.

It was a unique welcome of Ignitia, the Country of the Dragon Knights.

People from various countries who visited for the Advent Festival cheered and waved to the dragon knights.

[Are those the dragons of the South? They are small.]

“Is that so? They seem to be about 20 meters in size.”

[Only to that degree? They have a long way to go.]

Maybe from the sense of a 5 kilometers creature, they were small.

However, the dragons who flew freely in the sky were quite a sight.

This was the first time I saw a common dragon in this world.

The Black Dragon Zaratan was an artificial dragon created by ancient alchemists, so he was quite different from the orthodox dragons in this world.

Such things like Ignitia’s dragons and their offsprings were imported creatures from the southern continent Karkinos.

A body line like a dinosaur.

Thin forepaws and hind legs that were supple and strong.

There were no twisted horns like a ram, but they possessed diverse horns for each kind.

They understood human language, but they couldn’t talk.

In addition to that, the flight type had a large pair of wings resembling those of a bat.

Among the monsters with limited magical power that couldn't be classified as ordinary animals, those whose ecology had been elucidated to some extent and those that could be raised as livestock were called magical beasts.

Such things like Ignitia's dragons, griffins used as mounts by Kalkinos' sky cavalries, and cockatrice used for the core material of Wand of Hold, were classified as magical beasts.

Beyond the classification of magical beast, monsters that were stronger and harder to elucidate were called phantom beasts.

They could understand and speak human speech.

They could manipulate systematized magic rather than a single magic ability.

Anyway, their abilities as individuals were excellent.

There were only few sightings and encounters, and those were only from folklores and not the living ones.

There were various theories about the boundary of magical beasts and phantom beasts, but in many cases, things that corresponded to one or more of these were phantom beasts.

Although dragons understood human language, they couldn't talk so they were classified as magical beasts.

The unicorns which were said to inhabit the Harvan's forest were treated as phantom beasts, because while their bones and horns were circulating, there were only few encounters with living individuals.

Extraordinarily strong, classification impossible, and in addition had the ability to speak human language, Zaratan – Tirnanog was classified as a phantom beast.

And, those magical beasts and phantom beasts together, we called them as monstro³.

Ooh, finally it led to the official title.

“Uwah~~... , spectacular!”

When entering the gate of the Island of Messenger, the number of dragons dancing in the sky was further increased.

With red, blue, green flags of various colors in hand, the dragon knights flew over the city.

As the dragon knights with blue flags were doing looping-the-loop simultaneously, the dragon knights with red flags were turning in an inverted flight.

When the dragon knights were spreading out, a large 20-meters-long dragon appeared and spewed a blaze of flames.

People were clapping and cheering in response to the blazing flowers blooming in the air.

Was it like an air show, as it was called in my previous world?

While it was to make the eyes of the visitors who came for the advent of spring festival happy, it was also an event to display their military power.

It was said that Ignitia had roughly a hundred dragon knights who had the ability to ride on flying dragons.

Of course, not only the dragons but the city was also beautiful, I felt a unique exotic feeling.

Walls and pillars made of white beautiful crystalline limestones that could be collected abundantly in the South.

Ventilated buildings.

Decorations for the Advent were adorned everywhere.

Such things like red banners with Ignitia's coat of arms painted on them, and then statues of angel decorated with flowers, and handmade angel dolls.

People were wearing flower ornaments everywhere in an open and fun style of clothing.

Somehow, it felt like Greece or Italy.

Foods sold in such places like stalls and cities were also Mediterranean region-style delicious-looking foods.

When our horse-drawn carriage was moving along the street leading to the castle, I saw variety of magical beasts.

A lizard of a size similar to a cattle-size Triceratops was pulling a cart.

People who were likely to have money had salamanders on their shoulders.

While there were magical beasts originated from Ichthyes continent, there were also magical beasts originated from the continent of Karkinos.

Ignitia was not limited to dragons, it was the home of monsters.

The humans in this country, even the townspeople who were not dragon knights, could handle magical beasts.

They seemed to be the owners of a gentle telepathic ability.

While doing so, the horse-drawn carriage came through the gate of the royal castle.

Here, my father and I would get off the carriage and face the people of Ignitia's royal family.

Our servants went to the separate residence of Duke of Aurelia for the duration of our stay in the capital that had been prepared ahead of time and prepared various of things.

I felt sorry, but Tirnanog was waiting in the carriage while pretending to be a golem.

Now, although I was beginning to feel like sightseeing, I had to put my energy back in.

From now on, I would meet the problematic Prince Auguste.

The goal this time was 'Do not ridicule Prince Auguste.'

The thing to watch out for was the special event of the Advent Festival, the time of the tournament with a dragon.

It was a fancy event that seemed to be the taste of the townspeople, a jousting match using dragons that flew in the sky.

I had to be careful not to murmur things that were likely to be misunderstood when I was carelessly getting excited by the rarity of the 10-years-old Prince Augste.

I took out my hand mirror and made a final check of my appearance.

Yosh, there should not be any courtesy.

I also fixed my trademark vertical roll smartly.

“Erica, are you ready?”

“Yes! Otou-sama. I’m ready anytime.”

Now, it was time for the audience.

I should go and check the face of Prince Augste when he was a 10-years-old that I couldn’t see in the original game.

¹ Karkinos: means Cancer in Greek. If you haven’t notice, all the continents in this story were named after the ecliptic constellations (in Greek). Just as a reminder, the continent where our protagonist lives, Ichthyes, means Pisces in Greek. The author said that the continents look like their namesake. So Ichthyes looks like 2 fishes, a big one and a small one (Island of Messenger). And Karkinos looks like a crab, the peninsula mentioned here is the claw, and it looks like it’s trying to catch Ichthyes with its claw.

² Urthona and Tharmas are two of the four Zoas when Albion divided into four in the mythological writings of William Blake. Urthona is the Zoa of inspiration and creativity, while Tharmas is the Zoa of sensation. Incidentally, Albion founded a country on an island and ruled there. (source: Urthona, Tharmas, Albion)

³ So, this is the big edit. I have been translating the title of the original game as Liber Monstrum, but I was wrong, it supposed to be Liber Monstrorum or Book of Monsters. It is referring to a late seventh-or early eighth-century Anglo-Latin catalogue of marvellous creatures. (source) Oh but actually, on this sentence it said ‘monstro’. I think in Latin, it means monsters (plural). And if you add ‘rum’ in the end, it became ‘Of Monsters’. That’s why the original game’s name is Liber Monstrorum, but for the monster classification it is called monstro.

Chapter 21

Island of Messenger (3)

My father and I received a warm welcome from the King of the Union Kingdom, the King of Ignitia.

The structure of the castle looked like an open sanctuary peculiar to the South.

Passing through the waiting room for nobles of the countries that came to audience with the king for the Advent Festival, we were led to the slightly private space of the Ignitia's royal family.

“Oh, it's been a while, Ernst. Welcome to Ignitia.”

“I haven't heard from you for a long time, Your Majesty.”

“You're too stiff. You haven't changed. Erica-ojousan too, please feel relaxed and make yourself at home.”

“Y-yes, His Majesty the King. You're too gracious.”

To the King of Ignitia who looked very relaxed, Otou-sama—Duke Ernst, Duke of Aurelia, faced him with a stiff greeting.

The current King of Ignitia, Henry was in his fourties.

He was an energetic type of king that was filled with self-confidence and energy with a smile on his face.

He had long pale golden hair and purplish eyes which were the distinctive features of the Southern people.

The King's sunburnt tan-skin told me that he was still active as a dragon knight.

Whether because he laughed often, or because of the strength of the sun, his wrinkles were deep.

The King was accompanied by a silver dragon about the size of a large dog at his feet. The nobilities and royalty of Ignitia seemed to have a small dragon they grew up together with like siblings instead of attendants.

The Queen Consort had exceedingly pale blonde hair that was almost platinum and amethyst eyes as transparent as water.

She was a beautiful, awe-inspiring person that almost looked like a doll.

However, there was no doll-like atmosphere, she was full of vigour and dignity.

Was she really in her late thirties? How amazing...

Her waist was so thin that I couldn't believe she had borne three children.

And she also had a blue dragon in her arms.

While being as quiet as a figurine, I listened to the conversation between the frank King and my business-like father.

Although they were not present, the King and Queen seemed to have 3-years-old twins – the Second Prince Jules and the First Princess Agnes.

Also, the First Prince Auguste was not in this place.

Even though the story of the twin prince and princess rose to the topic, the story of Auguste didn't come out.

I didn't feel like touching the topic.

It made me feel a little uneasy.

At the very least, I wanted to confirm just his face at the present moment.

“Dear, if we monopolize the lovely lady, we will buy antipathy from the people.”

“Umu. You're right. People uprising is scary. Then, Ernst, Erica-ojousan, please enjoy the festival slowly.”

In one sentence that accompanied by Ignitia's joking style, the audience ended.

By the way, Ignitia was a country born from a slave uprising.

Although I was a bit nervous, I felt relieved that the audience was over with a harmless and inoffensive impression.

As we left the castle, I was given a free time from my father.

Since it was the long-awaited visit to Ignitia, he said that I should enjoy the exotic atmosphere.

By the way, Otou-sama had a meeting with the minister and other aristocrats about the Advent Festival.

Let's cheers for good work.

(Yeah~~... , I can finally loosen up a little bit...!)

I felt a bit regretful that I couldn't meet Auguste.

However, it couldn't be helped.

I decided to use my precious free time to extend my wings with all my might.

❖❖❖

In the cathedral near the royal castle, Ignitia's guide-like booklets for children were sold, so I bought it as a test.

The booklet was manuscripted by automatic grafting golems, and the content was a simple map of the Island of Messenger where the positions of religion-related historical sites were filled in along with a rough explanation about each site.

The commentary was tailor-made for the picture book, and it was briefly summarized so that it was easy for children and foreigners to understand.

The price was one gold coin and it was set for aristocrats and wealthy people.

However, considering the technology and the price of this world, it was quite reasonable.

Since what they sell was a sanctuary, it might be some kind of volunteer activity.

I had prepared some preparations for Ignitia beforehand.

However, there were many things that I didn't know among the local legends written in the booklet.

For example, there seemed to be some kind of a legend about the Island of Messenger.

Once upon a time, the Island of Messenger was called as the Island of Dead People.

The island was dominated by a terrible man-eating giant.

The name of the humanoid giant was Cain.

According to the legend, an angel of God beat Cain alone and freed the island, that was why it came to be called as the Island of Messenger.

By the way, the name of the King of Cascadia who fought with the Founder King of Ignitia was also Cain.

Cascadia became the Country of Vampires in the generation of King Cain, and he became known as the Lunatic King.

Perhaps there was a mixed up between the story of the Founder King who killed the vampires and the Giant War that had lasted for a long time since then.

'Island of Dead People', it felt like it would be overflowing with zombies rather than vampires.

Horrifying.

But, that name 'Cain', I remembered seeing it in my previous life.

It was a conversation in the bulletin board of the original game's capture targets' information.

According to the character introduction on the homepage, there were seven people to capture in [Liber Monstrorum].

The black haired, gloomy, and extremely sadist Duke's son, Klaus who had dead eyes.

Blonde haired, with smiling poker face and human distrust, the flirty type character at first glance, the First Prince Auguste.

The red haired son of a former Earl with an impression of an outlaw, Harold.

Black haired professor with eyeglasses, a super strict teacher, the young Earl Brad.

My older brother, the blonde hair Duke's son who was equipped with a monocle, Eduart who had a dark smile.

Elegant hidden noble with glasses and silver hair, the gentle and clumsy teacher, Elric.

Blonde haired Duke's son with an eyepatch, the wild-type mysterious person, Claude.

It was supposed to be only these seven.

At this point, I remembered the looks of all of the character images, the color of clothes, and their rough profiles.

By the way, the current Eduart-oniisama hadn't use a monocle yet.

It seemed that he would use it in six years.

However, the people who had completed the strategy guide on the bulletin board of the website were excited with 'Prince Cain of Merry Bad' or 'Cain-sama the Final Savage Yandere.'

Merry Bad was a Merry Bad Ending¹.

It was similar to the story that got the ending where the prince and the princess kissed on top of many dead bodies².

I wondered who that was.

Or maybe it was a hidden character?

Because it was impossible to be a giant, I believed he was a vampire.

If possible, to the heroine of this world, I didn't want you to do that kind of route selection.

Now, to the real issue at hand: the tourism.

My real intention was to look at this Island of Messenger once again from the opposite beach.

However, since my father had told me that my range of action right now was only within the island, I would save it for when we returned home from this island.

Even inside the island, I could enjoy the exotic atmosphere.

In the city, wherever I went I could see people who brought monsters.

On the contrary, there were only few simple golems such as those seen in Aurelia.

I had disguised Tirnanog as an iron golem, but maybe it only made him more prominent.

Perhaps because golem was unusual, people of Ignitia kept giving us a glancing look as they passed by.

Outside of Aurelia, it was rare to see a fine golem like this.

I spoke with Tirnanog with a low voice so that we wouldn't be suspected by the people of Ignitia.

“This is a bit similar to an adventure with all the fun and the festive atmosphere, Til.”

[Me too, everything I see ever since I got resurrected is all unusual and fun.]

My companion seemed to be enjoying this as well above all.

According to the booklet and my preparations in advance, the Island of Messenger seemed to have a church-related building as the main tourist attraction.

It was a chapel in the cathedral, with such things like an underground crypt and a monastery inside the tower.

Because it was the home of this religion, as expected the full set would be completed if we went there.

“First off, that's right. Let's go to the cathedral.”

[Umu!]

Anyway, let's start from the biggest and most famous place.

I took Tirnanog along as we decided to head to the cathedral.

¹ Merry Bad is an abbreviation from Merry Bad Ending. Ending in which the interpretation of whether it is a happy ending or bad ending is up to the viewpoint of the readers/players. So in this case, I'm guessing that if you get Cain's ending, that means that you get the bad end (since he's the villain). But since he's (maybe) a handsome character some players are intentionally trying to get that ending, and when they get it, it's a 'happy ending' for them.

² I don't know what is this referencing at, but what I get from the google search is the real story of Snow White, where the prince was actually a necrophilia and that's why he was so excited in kissing the dead body of Snow White.

Chapter 22

Island of Messenger (4)

Ignitia was the only country that brought the faith of God to this Union Kingdom. It was not only the home of the dragons but also the home of the church and the cathedral.

However, it couldn't be called a religious nation.

Ignitia who was a former country of the Romulus Empire – the ancient empire of the southern continent Karkinos – learned the open-minded way of religion and freedom from the empire and practiced it when they became the ruler of Ichthyes continent.

They were integrating with the local religions by god's syncretism or incorporating their gods as a saint or angel.

Religious circumstances of the Union Kingdom were established by a policy not to completely overwrite the local religions.

Thanks to that, the northern Lucanrant continued the faith of wolf god Holle, the east polytheism was still valid, and the western faith of Bren was also active.

The god of the northern Lucanrant, Holle, became St. Horatius.

The eastern Harvan practiced polytheism, but the goddess was the only one identified as a God and the rest of the gods were regarded as an angel or a saint.

Bren the god of the western Aurelia, as you know, also became St. Brendan.

Apparently, before Ignitia arrived on Ichthyes they seemed to have a pagan god. That made me quite understand the interior of this cathedral.

The cathedral of the royal capital of Ignitia was originally the building for Ignitia's royal castle.

Therefore, it was especially more complicated compared to the other cathedrals.

In this vast cathedral with complicated structure, many paintings, sculptures, and mural paintings were displayed.

But, for the moment there were no God's figures in the exhibits that I had seen so far. Because there was no circumstance like a ban on statues, he seemed to be a low-key God.

Instead, the interior of the cathedral was a treasure house of phantom beasts and magical beasts that should be originated from paganism.

A relief of a beast that looked like a centaur whose upper body was a person and its lower body was a horse.

A religious painting with a drawing of a man with four heads on one torso that had a mouth on his abdomen.

A cup in which a humanoid monster like the first one was carved.

A statue of a goddess with ten or more breasts.

Just by looking around, I found lots of such things.

Even an angel had been designed with the motif of another god on the southern continent.

I was able to see the familiar story of Kingdom of Ignitia on the scriptures as I proceeded along the way, and if I veered away a little from there I would be able to follow the story of each ethnic derivation.

“Church-related buildings are also a huge book for faithful readers who cannot read letters, Tir.”

[Is this an alternative altar? It's a bit of a mess.]

The scriptures were only allowed in manuscripts in the language used in the ancient Romulus Empire.

Therefore, I couldn't read the scriptures yet.

I only knew within the range that Oto-sama and Onii-sama had read aloud. That was why these scriptures that had pictures to go along with were very fresh.

We went around the complicated cathedral aimlessly while ignoring the regular route. Somehow, maybe because I struggled for a niche hobby and that there were only Tirnanog and I in the surroundings, I didn't worry about it. Even if something happened, there was the reliable Tirnanog. In the first place, I hadn't raise a death flag yet.

In the meantime, we arrived at an area where it was excessively splendor and seemed to use a staggering amount of money. Moreover, there was a familiarity with the story which was painted on the wall somehow.

What appeared before our eyes was a mural painting of a saint who was swallowed and drifted by an enormous sea creature.

No matter how I looked at it, it closely resembled the content of this iron golem. No way, was the huge monster Zaratan a famous being?

[What's wrong, Erika.]

“This, what do you think?”

[Oh, ooooohhh! It's my figure!]

“However you look at this, this is Tir, or Zaratan...”

[Kukukuku! So the barbarians in the South worship me! Of course!]

“Well, I wonder how did it happen...”

I felt like I couldn't afford to buy this bad taste.

I believed it was made by craftsmen from Aurelia who was brought in during the cathedral construction.

There had been harmoniously crafted Harvan's craftsmen areas, which were rather tasteful and astringent, and the areas of Lucanrant's craftsmen had a simple and warm

style.

There were many Zaratans in other mural paintings in the surroundings.

A story where a ship carrying a saint mistook Zaratan who was floating in the sea as an island and landed.

A story where the people that rode on the back of a huge creature were hit by great flood caused by a divine punishment.

Etc. etc.

The subject itself was a common story all over the world, but it was Zaratan, not a whale or turtle, that was drawn.

This beast was surprisingly loved.

“Do you like this mural?”

[Umu. The form of these horns are good. The painters were the ones who understand my coolness well.]

“That’s good.”

[Umu—that’s right, do not worry about me, you can go looking around. I will know where you are by your smell. I will enjoy my mural a little longer.]

“Is that so? Well then, I’ll accept your kind offer.”

While leaving behind Tirnanog who was appreciating the mural painting of Zaratan more than the painting itself, I also continued to follow the works and steadily progressed along the monster pictures route.

Because it was the point, I wanted to appreciate what could only be seen in Ignitia.

So, it was the inherent belief-like part of the South that I mainly checked.

I also thought of it while preparing, but the original belief in Ignitia had a sense of not being very holy monotheism.

A flock of monsters that looked like Hyakki Yagyō¹.

History of saints suffering from such thing like martyrdom.

Heroes who had helps from angels, dragons, and strange-looking monsters.

Except for the saints and heroes, all of them were depicted as monsters with bad aftertaste in elaborate artworks.

“How unusual. No way, I haven’t seen any visitors looking at those artworks except for me.”

I heard someone’s voice.

I looked back toward where the voice were coming from.

From the stained glass, a light shining in seven colors was cast.

A boy was walking in that light.

Looking at him from inside the dim room, it looked as if the backlight was surrounding him.

My eyes gradually got used to the light.

He was a bit older than me, maybe a little bit younger than the eastern young noble Klaus Harvan.

Sparkling sunshine, smooth blonde hair about the shoulder length.

Clear amethyst eyes.

Pure white skin that was not burned on the day.

Rose-colored cheeks.

He looked like a statue – or the neat facial appearance that came out of shoujo manga.

Among the people of Ignitia who were already reputed as beautiful, he was pretty beautiful.

A small golden dragon cuddled up on his shoulder.

I also felt that the color of its scales was in harmony with the boy’s golden hair, which was a dark color for those of Ignitia.

Huh? He was a boy, wasn't he? He looked like a girl.

If that was a girl, it was a beautiful girl that was difficult to contend with, even in my previous life.

The neck ribbon on white shirt was black, the black trousers were knee length, and boots—judging from the clothing, he was definitely a boy.

“Who are you?”

“Heeh, you don't know me?”

His statue-like expression was broken, and he smiled like a mischievous prankster.

Was he a celebrity?

Certainly, he was a beautiful, eye-catching boy.

Maybe a son of a noble?

Or, was he a boy actor from a theatrical company that was famous in the royal capital?

“Hmm, this is convenient for me.”

He stroked the golden dragon with a gentle gesture.

Oh, this person was beautiful from his head until the tip of his nail.

When he looked down a little, I could see splendid eyelashes that few could match.

“...What do you mean? I wonder what is convenient for you.”

“Oops, about this. Please don't mind it.”

How suspicious.

However, there were circumstances that people didn't want to be questioned at any rate.

If it didn't do extraordinary damage to me, I wondered if I could let him deceive me for a while.

He made me feel that way.

But, I'd like to hear about his name once.

"I am Erica, who are you?"

"Oops, I'm getting ahead of myself. I apologize for my rudeness. I am the son of the clergy here and my baptismal name was 'Angel'. What was Erica-ojousan doing in a place like this?"

He called himself an angel.

Usually, if someone else was saying that, I would burst into laughter.

But, I felt like I could forgive him since he was this beautiful.

I didn't know the custom of Ignitia, but it seemed likely that the clergy's son's name was 'Angel'.

"I just came from the West... Um, I was just sightseeing."

"Well, if you are an alchemist of Aurelia, then that energetic iron golem that I saw over there is Ojou-san's?"

"Y-yes..."

"Heeh, amazing~~. To think that such a small Ojou-san can manipulate that thing."

Kept affirming while diverting my eyes.

If I kept telling lies forever, it seemed that I would become surprisingly stressed out.

[What's wrong, Erica. An enemy?]

While making light footsteps, Tirnanog came closer.

Oh, he was fast.

I should have walked around quite a while, but he found me already?

As expected from our family's guardian beast.

"Do not attack. This person is the son of a priest of this cathedral... in other words, he

is safe."

[I see, that's too bad.]

"Also, please be quiet a little bit."

[Umu. Leave it to me. I am always quiet.]

The self-proclaimed Angel-san suddenly held Tirnanog to his chest.

Angel-san was looking inside from the gap between armor.

For some reason, his golden dragon also looked at the eyes of Tirnanog with somehow an overwhelmingly suspicious expression.

Hii, it would be bad if his identity was exposed.

"Heeh, this is interesting. So golem can move naturally like this... Oh, does Goldberry also interested in this?"

"Um, wait—"

"How does it work? Hm? It looks like there is something inside—"

[...!?]

"U-um, I... I am from Aurelia, but I am not good at alchemy."

"Heeh."

"I cannot do the conversion of magical power well, so I used a golem creation technique by directly engraved spells on the metal."

"I see, even within your weak field, you made efforts to do what you can and made it this far. You're a hard worker, huh~."

"That's why, I feel embarrassed if you keep looking at that child so much. My coarse work may be seen."

"Hm~, I think it's a good idea. I don't know much about golems."

With a mysterious expression, he kept looking at me and Tirnanog alternately.

Uh, it was painful to be seen with those pure eyes.

I felt that the lie in my heart was becoming a burden.

Let's change the topic.

“A, ah! Excuse me!”

“Hm~?”

“Is there any suggestion on the murals of the cathedral? I would like you to tell me if there is a place that I would regret if I didn’t see it!”

I diverted the conversation with a lack of casual topics and recaptured Tirnanog from the arms of Angel-san.

Fuuh, it was better to be slow and steady rather than being hasty.

Especially this time, I felt like the golden dragon named Goldberry was already suspecting something.

I was afraid of the intuition of the wild, so I had to take a precaution.

If Tirnanog was kidnapped, I would have no excuse for my ancestors.

“Yosh~. You have shown me interesting things. In return, I also have to show a great thing to Ojou-san.”

“Thank you.”

“If you like this kind of slightly disgusting things, then there is only *that* place. I will show you the place with the rarest and strangest things.”

“Eeh... , is it alright?”

“But I will get angry if it leaked out. It’s a special service for Erica-ojousan only, a big service of lavish hospitality!”

In a dramatic gesture, he bowed exaggeratedly.

This was a good omen.

I got a beautiful and friendly sightseeing guide who was familiar with the church here.

Wasn’t this quite lucky?

Thus, I decided to ask the boy named ‘Angel’ to be a guide in the cathedral tour.

¹ Hyakki Yagyō or Night Parade of One Hundred Demons is a concept in Japanese folklore. It is a parade which is composed of a hundred kinds of demons.

Chapter 23

Island of Messenger (5)

The self-proclaimed Angel-san with blonde hair smoothly pulled my hand and led me to the back of the cathedral.

The Black Dragon Tirnanog who was disguised as a star steel golem walked a little behind us with two large bags in his hands.

There was another bag of the same size that I had, but Angel-san now had it.

He was a kind person.

If I looked closely, muscles were firmly built on his arms even though they seemed slender.

Contrary to the indoor image of a clergy's son, he seemed to be quite trained.

He opened the locked doors every time he went and was aiming somewhere straight ahead.

When I looked at his hand, he was opening and closing doors with a single key, not a bunch of keys.

Apparently, he seemed to have a Skeleton Key that was specialized for this cathedral.

“Are we moving to a considerably inner part of this cathedral?”

“Ah, it’s a place which only gets published several times a year.”

“It’s a rare thing, isn’t it?”

“Yeah. But, I’m special, so I can see it anytime.”

“Wow, that’s amazing.”

Was it like a secret Buddha in Buddhism?

Such thing like a famous temple or something similar that would only be displayed once in months or years.

I was getting a little excited.

Every time he opened a door, the murals and sculptures of monsters grew more prominent.

The degree of chaos was reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch and Bruegel.¹

Children's graffiti, nightmare, and true monstrosity were mixed in proper distribution that made chills ran through my spine.

Although they were scary, I thought that this was fun.

"This is... it's pretty good."

"The actual thing that I want to show you is still yet to come, our destination is the innermost room."

"It's in the deepest part of the cathedral..."

I remembered about the recent incident when I reached the deepest part of the ruins in my hometown, and that had been terrible.

It became a good memory when I thought about it now, but I was a little traumatized about being in the deepest part.

I took a glimpse at Tirnanog behind me.

Well, the former source of my trauma had become my friend, so it was alright now.

"Now, it's waiting ahead of you."

Angel-san opened the last door where he said the extraordinary artwork was, which was different than the other doors.

It was a simple room, spacious but with little decoration.

In the back of the room, giant limestone walls seemingly to have been cut off from other places was enshrined.

Before I recognized clearly what was drawn there, chills ran through my spine.

"On the other side, that is our Lord, God that is said to be the one pillar of this world."

On the walls of the limestone was drawn the image of the only God, emphasizing aspects of the sun god.

Brilliant vermillion, black, white, and golden.

Humans and other creations were drawn at the lower part, grace and love that was equally given by God were expressed.

This alone, was not particularly unpleasant.

There were countless hands grew from the sun.

A horrid of so many elongated, light hands.

Each one of His hands was stretched over the people's head.

Seven eyes were drawn in the sun.

There were countless eyes in each hand.

According to the sense of a modern human, it couldn't be said to be flattering, graphic or artistic.

However, the murals painted elaborately with virtuousness that made you feel something urgent, overwhelming the viewers.

Although it was a tremendous masterpiece, it was not the kind of artwork that was oozing with holiness.

At first glance it seemed like a scrawl, and you would want to burst out laughing.

But, surely after you burst out laughing, you would regret your poor sense.

“It seems that it was cut out from the altar of a sacred place on the continent of Karkinos.”

“Amazing...”

“Do you feel uncomfortable or want to withdraw?”

“I feel uncomfortable, but I’m more scared than that.”

“Oh well. It is too strange, and it will be inconvenient for believers to be disillusioned

or frightened, so it seems it is not normally displayed to the public."

I couldn't take my eyes away from God's figure drawn on the mural.
It might be a gut feeling, but this seemed to have some kind of beauty.

Not only God and humans, but other figures were also drawn there.
A number of angels who obeyed God.

Four angels with high status were drawn largely, while other angels were drawn smaller.

When considering the four archangels, a certain religion of my previous world came to my mind, but their appearances were quite different.

These angels had beasts' face.

"Are these... angels...?"

"Oh, yes. These guys are pretty deformed, huh?"

Among the religious paintings and statues that I had seen outside this room, the face of an angel was represented by a beautiful human face.

That was why I got puzzled by the discrepancy.

The angels drawn on this wall seemed more like an Egyptian god rather than an angel.

The angel drawn in the spot closest to God had a luxurious special treatment.

It was drawn largely and used an abundant amount of precious gold and cinnabar sands.

The head was a lion, with six wings, and had a strong body.

On its right hand was a sword of fire, and on its left hand was a bottle of medicine.

The lion angel who wore a red clothing and the other three archangels – horse-headed, ox-headed and bird-headed, were followed by other angels whose faces were painted red.

The four archangels had gestures to command the flocks of angels respectively.

(Isn't there something like this in Christianity? Something like... Seraphim or Cherub, if I'm not mistaken.)

I was overwhelmed by such a masterpiece painting with such a strange God and angels, and I lost my words.

I had my mouth half-open while looking up.

I slowly retreated to capture the full view.

Then, I bumped into something unexpectedly soft.

“Oh my, you’re such a bad boy for bringing a girl into a place like this.”

From behind, I heard a saccharine voice of a woman.

“Ah~~, I give up. We’re found out by someone annoying...”

The self-proclaimed Angel-san watched the person behind me with a hand on his forehead.

When I turned around looking at his line of sight, my eyes met with the beautiful woman's.

「おやおや、こんなところに
女の子を連れ込むなんて、悪い坊やだこと」

バリュー

エーリカ・アウレリア

オーギュスト・イグニシア



She had a pair of eyes that gave a strong impression, even if they were light up in amusement, I could feel their intensity.

Originally tall and wore high heels on top of that, she was looking down from a considerably high place.

She wore a ponytail full of plenty, glossy volume of blonde hair that gave me the impression of a mane.

From the expensive red dress with the degree of exposure that was unique to the South, her voluptuous, sunburnt tanned chest overflowed.

She was gorgeous with gold jewelry on her whole body,

It was regrettable.

If she was ten years younger, then I guess she would be a type that would replace the role of a bad guy.

Such a gorgeous beauty was there.

“I’m annoying? My, my, the boy who hasn’t grown hair yet, has come to say that.”

“See~, you’re so annoying.”

When Angel-san said that as if sulking, the mysterious beauty laughed throatily.

“Angel-san, do you know this person?”

“Ah, this person is—... how should I say this...”

“Angel-san? Heeh? Angel-san, huh? That’s right. You sure are an angel.”

“Geh... Don’t say anything unnecessary”

Angel-san pulled my hand and drew me away from the mysterious beauty.

Well, was she a troublesome acquaintance?

By the way, he did say that he would get angry if outsiders entered this place.

“Unnecessary? Me? Kufufufu, had I ever said anything unnecessary even just one

word?"

"A long time ago, you said something unnecessary."

"How cold~. As expected, I wonder if young girls are better? Angel-sama?"

The mysterious beauty provoked Angel-san in an amusing way.

I interjected to ask who she was.

"Excuse me..."

"Ah—, my bad. This person is my acquaintance... I can't tell you too much, but she's the one who lives in this cathedral. I shouldn't be tattling, but you can feel relieved."

"Really."

Somehow, I only understood that she was someone with a delicate position.

I wondered if she was the great master of the cathedral, a daughter of a nobleman with a special circumstance or something else.

It seemed that it was not a good story to meddle with, so I decided not to talk about it anymore.

"My, my, the totally-not-scary older sister is exposed. I was wondering if I should make my self-introduction funny."

"What do you want to say—..."

"If you are Angel-sama, then I am a devil—!... Something like that."

"That's not right, and that's not funny either. That's just normal."

The mysterious-beauty-now-self-proclaimed-demon raised her hands with a gesture as if threatening a child.

Her nails had a high offensive power as they were elongated.

Angel-san shrunk himself as if scared.

It seemed that she was a cheerful and funny older sister.

"Was that not scary?"

“Yes, yes, I’m afraid, very frightened. Please stop scaring me.”

“Ah! Yes, I was also scared.”

“Ufu~~. That is excellent. All living beings should fear me like this~~”

Devil-san seemed to be in high spirits like a child, a complete turnaround from before.

Angel-san seemed to be annoyed, but he looked somewhat smiley.

In any case, they were a close pair of angel and devil.

I wondered what else was hidden behind closed doors, it was irresistible for a boring person like me.

Then the sound of a bell was ringing from outside the cathedral.

That would be the bell that informed evening had come.

“It’s already this late. It’s better for Ojou-san to go home soon.”

“Oh my, how unfortunate. I thought it was lively and fun.”

“Yes, yes. The good time is over. We couldn’t hold back such a small child forever, can we?”

Oops, that reminded me that I was invited to the banquet of the Advent of the royal family, and it said that it would take place all night long.

It seemed that aristocrats from different countries would gather, so I also had to dress in appropriate costume.

“Thank you very much for today, and I will come and visit tomorrow as soon as I have time to move freely”

“Well, see you next time~. I will also show you the underground cemetery.”

“Underground cemetery... , if you are going to sightseeing with a girl, there are many other places more appropriate. Good grief.”

“Eh~? Is this room also appropriate to show to a girl?”

“Well, see you, Erica, I will choose a better place next time!”

While bantering good-naturedly, the self-proclaimed angel and devil were waving their hands.

After all, it seemed that religious relations were special.

Actually, I wanted to ask for a sightseeing guide in the downtown, but I couldn't say such selfish thing.

Leaving the cathedral, I whispered to Tirnanog secretly around the area where the population became scarce.

"Thank you for being quiet for a long time, Tir."

[Ah. It's an easy thing to do. You looked like you were having fun too.]

"Yes, I enjoyed it."

When I finished the sightseeing tour of the cathedral with Angel-san, it was already sunset outside.

The red sun was being swallowed by the horizon.

Maybe during the festival, this hour would be crowded with people.

In the air that wrapped around the city, there was a scent peculiar to the evening that stimulated my hunger.

Well, if I ate something now, I would be troubled when I had to wear a dress later.

While suffering, Tirnanog pulled the hem of my skirt.

[But, Erica. You must not be deceived by them.]

"Hm, what is it?"

[That boy is not an angel, and that woman is not a devil.]

"Well, I understand it as well, so it's alright."

[Yes. That's good. Erica is smart.]

What was that.

I felt somewhat uncomfortable as if when I was told '*Santa is not real*' I unexpectedly said '*I know that*'.

I didn't understand the intention of the advice in the first place, but I decided not to think about it deeply.

I went through a lively city along with Tirnanog and returned to the temporary residence of Duke of Aurelia.

¹ Hieronymus Bosch was a painter from Netherland that was known for his fantastic illustrations of religious concepts and narratives. Pieter Bruegel the Elder was his best-known follower.

Chapter 24

Island of Messenger (6)

The banquet was done in a hall called Lion.

The royal castle itself was vast, and the hall was at least as big as a gymnasium.

On the pillars and walls of the hall, there were many lion sculptures as its name suggested.

Although I thought it was strange since it was a country of dragons, it seemed that a lion was also an auspicious beast of Ignitia.

Between the lion decorations, a lot of big tables were put in, and the party was ready.

The lighting was a huge chandelier with dozens of candles.

Perhaps they were beeswax candles, the entire room smelled a bit sweet.

Under the orange flickering light, nobles invited from all over this continent were arrayed.

The royal aristocrats of Ignitia had put a small dragon on their shoulder or on their feet.

It was a living accessory but also serving as a security guard.

The nobility of Lucanrant had a sheathed large ceremonial sword on their waist, and the aristocracy from Harvan wore robes and held a staff.

As expected the appearance seemed to be quite different depending on the place of birth.

By the way, nobility of Aurelia was modestly carrying several wands, which was quite plain.

...I removed a lot of accessories that were attached on my body in large quantity that was for showing off.

Somehow, the vacant seats for Harvan nobility stood out.

The aristocratic women were still there, but I couldn't see the appearance of most aristocratic men.

I wondered what happened?

I pulled my father's sleeve and asked.

"Did Otou-sama know what happened with Harvan people?"

"Oh, it seems there were grave robberies in several places at the same time. It seems that every excellent mage is on hand for the investigation and post-treatment."

"...Grave robbery, huh?"

"Don't worry, Erica. Harvan's aristocracy are experts in this kind of thing. They will solve it soon."

"Yes..."

My father gently stroked my head.

Certainly, Harvan's people were experts on such things like evil spirits, so that gave me more peace of mind rather than entrusting that task to somebody else.

But, recently there were too many grave robbery cases.

Even in my ears who were ignorant of the situation, now and then the stories of the grave robbery case jumped in.

"This time, is it the cemetery tomb of Cascadia?"

"I don't know about that... Erica, you had better not to say that word on the party's seat."

"Ah, yes. I apologize, Otou-sama."

I quickly held my tongue.

I carelessly chatted with the conviction of people of Aurelia.

However, for people from other countries, the story related to Cascadia was a rather

delicate topic.

People in other former kingdoms – especially Harvan and Lucanrant people – seriously didn't like Cascadia almost to the point of vampire phobia.

Even now they had been subjected to thorough anti-vampire training up to the low level workers.

It was not unreasonable.

When Cascadia existed on this continent, Harvan and Lucanrant had been forced into slavery for a long time.

The slavery status continued until Ignitia came and the three countries combined forces and exterminated Cascadia.

The current Union Kingdom had a strong aspect as 'an alliance to oppose Gigantia that oppresses slave ranks, uses giants and dishonors the dignity of human beings,' but the purpose of the alliance formation at that time was different.

It was 'an alliance to annihilate Cascadia and vampires that oppress slave ranks, play games with life and dishonor the dignity of human beings.'

About this point, Aurelia, the Visitor's Clan who came after Cascadia ceased to exist, seemed to be an outsider.

Assuming that it was related to Cascadia, even if there was no particular trouble, the Duke would be investigating it straight away.

Klaus and the Duke of Harvan wouldn't be able to come to the banquet until the tomb cases were resolved.

I could see the figure of the Duchess of Harvan at a distance, but the walls of people were thick and I couldn't see the figure of Ann.

Whatever.

I'd be happy if I could meet Ann if possible, but I would be in trouble if I met Klaus and he applied for a duel.

I wondered what that was, that letter of challenge...

I wondered if Klaus kept track of his strength properly.

Even if I or someone else competed with him, I could only see the future where I lost in a moment.

“Do you feel lonely when you think that you cannot meet Klaus?”

“Eh? There is no such a thing... ah, it’s alright. I will greet the Duchess and Ann-sama later.”

“...I see. Hm. I seem to have gotten ahead of myself. Forget it.”

Why did only the name of Klaus come out just now?

Somehow, Otou-sama had a dejected facial expression for some reason.

Perhaps, because we seemed to be on good terms, he was thinking of engagement or something.

But, for Klaus, I was a rival.

I wanted to be at least an ordinary friend with Klaus.

While thinking about that, the court musicians’ orchestra began playing music.

Matching the timing, maids and cooks came bringing a silver dish on which the dish was served.

Looking at the dishes with variety of sweets, the children of aristocratic from each country gave a childish cheer.

“It has started, huh.”

“Ah, no, Erica, the banquet for the Advent Festival is not a formal thing. Drink as you like and enjoy eating as you like. You can enjoy a conversation, you can sing, you can dance. The custom to welcome guests who came to the festival was a bit elegant.”

“Is that so?”

“It will be just right for practice before entering society. You should get used to it gradually while enjoying yourself without putting burden on your shoulders.”

“Yes, Otou-sama.”

While answering, I was already mindful about it.

A confectionery craftsman carried pure white sugar confectionery on a big silver dish which might be one meter in diameter.

It was in the form of the Island of Messenger.

It was such a waste to eat.

Someone suddenly tapped my leg lightly.

Tirnanog, hiding under the table cloth, looked at the castle of sugar candy with his face peeping through the gap.

Erica, what is that? Even though it's a building, it has a delicious smell?

"It's a sweet for the festival that was made of sugar. It seems to be made on a special celebration day."

Ooh, I want to try it too.

"Well, I'll take a look if there is a chance."

I wanted to give him not only candy, but also meat.

Today he had brought heavy bags for me, so I needed to compensate him.

Ignitia was closely related to Karkinos continent in the South, so the cooking was a southern continent style.

Wine with high alcohol concentration diluted with water.

Savory fragrance of meat baked with plenty of spices.

It was a slumping season for oysters since it was already a bit past the season, so now was the last time to eat them.

Fruits with gorgeous hues typical of the southern countries were lining up.

From tea, coffee, and cocoa all were present, but I wanted to drink alcohol.

As expected, drinking was not permitted for eight years olds~. How regretful!

“Please wait, Erica, I have to say hello to His Majesty before meals.”

“Fugah!? Y-yes? I understand, Oto-sama.”

Uwaah~, pardon me~, I just got my hands on an appetizer carpaccio~.

Baked freshly made meat and oysters with plenty of plumpness, I hadn’t eaten a bite~.

While listening to my gluttonous heart’s voice with a noble maiden’s mask, I drew my attention back to the table with my back hair fluttering.

Tirnanog waved his hand from under the table while balancing a lobster bigger than himself.

Please, leave a portion for me too?

Then my father brought me to King of Ignitia.

This time it seemed that not only the Queen Consort was here, but the Prince was also here.

Ooh, finally I could confirm the face of Prince Auguste!

The prince was wearing a decorated clothing with red gold thread, which was the signature color of Ignitia, and had a small golden dragon on his shoulder.

Silky blonde hair with a deeper color compared to other Ignitia royalty.

His skin which sooner or later would become tanned due to sunburnt, was still white as if transparent at the present time.

His face was like the Queen; similar to a doll.

I couldn’t believe that he would be a gaudy prince in six years.

There, the figure of a boy who looked like a beautiful girl—

(...Huh?)

Somehow, wasn’t he similar to that self-proclaimed Angel-san?

Twins?

Approximate other?

—Were they one and the same?

That golden dragon resembled the dragon of Angel-san who was called Goldberry.

Prince Auguste didn't try to adjust his eyes even when my father and I greeted him.

He didn't move one eyebrow, he just kept looking far away outside the window.

The impression was different from the friendly, expressive, self-proclaimed Angel-san I met during the day.

Right now, he looked like a statue made of alabaster.

Because I was staring at him too intensely, Prince Auguste glanced over here coldly.

(Hii, I carelessly stared at him. I wonder if this can be condemned as rude.)

But when the Prince glanced at me silently, he returned his line of sight outside the window once again.

Indeed, his mannerism had the sense of being apathetic, as if everything was insignificant to him.

But, only the golden dragon who looked like Goldberry that was on his shoulder stared at me.

She narrowed her eyes as if smiling, and then tried to pull Prince Auguste's hair.

Still, Prince Auguste continued to look outside the window, with a look similar to a statue.

After all, it was worrisome.

I couldn't stand it, I finally raised my voice to the Prince.

“Prince Auguste. Pardon me, by any chance, might you be Angel-sama?”

Ah.

I noticed it after I said it out loud, but what was that poem!

But, how else should I say it—!

“Fugoh-”

“Guh-”

Both my father and King Ignitia who were drinking sake together, choked over their drinks simultaneously.

Why were you eavesdropping?

Please stop it!

Uwaaaah. I could die out of embarrassment.

Even during my chunnibyou phase in my previous life, I had never written such a thing!

Oh, I should have asked ‘Are you the boy who became my sightseeing guide in the cathedral?’

The greatest blunder of my life...

“Well, she said you’re an angel, Augoste.”

The Queen Consort were smiling brightly.

I felt that her atmosphere was somewhat gentle.

Prince Augoste who was urged by the Queen, finally turned around.

Still, the face of Prince Augoste remained as still as an alabaster statue.

“Oh, Erica-jou seems to have misunderstood me as an angel because of my beauty. But I am an ordinary person. Please be relieved. I will not fly away somewhere.”

As he said those words, he stood up and bowed.

“However, because human being is troubled by the flesh, I cannot always be healthy or stay as I was. I feel unwell, so I will withdraw from this evening banquet. Erica-jou, please excuse my rudeness.”

“Ah, yes.”

“Do not worry about me, please continue enjoying the party.”

Without moving an eyebrow while saying all of that, Prince Auguste went away.

After all it was the same voice as the self-proclaimed Angel-san.

But the attitude was different as if they were a different person.

Wasn’t that too much?

Or, did he has multiple personality or something?

While being apologized by the Queen, the questions that couldn’t be answered continued turning around in my mind.

Chapter 25

Island of Messenger (7)

Too much embarrassment, I broke away from the table where the royal family members sat.

I was in the midst of taking a plate of meat in one hand.

If you had a buddy to eat as much as you could, you could taste a little bit of everything without having to worry about various dishes.

With such a situation, while I was going around various tables and saying greetings hurriedly, I made some friends before I knew it.

One was Tricia, daughter of Baron Rails from Aurelia.

The other person was Marquia, daughter of Viscount Jonas from Ignitia.

They said they were eight years old just like me.

Tricia attached a wand to the band of her dress for decorative purpose, and Marquia had a dragon as small as a bird on her shoulder.

“Erica-sama, Erica-sama, please use my handkerchief so that your hands will not get dirty.”

“Erica-sama, please enjoy this sweet. This sugar confection is very popular among Ignitia’s aristocratic children.”

“Erica-sama is a princess from Aurelia, same as me. Ignitia’s aristocratic please leave.”

“What, on the contrary, Baroness lady. This here is Ignitia. Isn’t it natural that people of Ignitia will show her around?”

“Both of you, if you make a lot of noises, you will disturb everyone.”

Tricia and Marquia, the two cute girls had grabbed me from both sides.

My current situation was like a captured alien.

If it was about this age, they would say 'He/She will play with me!' and compete for that friend.

Such aspect of tiny little girls was very charming.

Both Tricia and Marquia were caught up in the struggle and looking at this, Tirnanog came out from under the table.

I quickly exchanged the heap of dishes that I brought with the empty dish that Tirnanog had finished eating.

"Sorry."

[Don't worry. I ate something other than the dish I brought.]

"Be careful not to be found out, okay?"

[It should be fine. I'm still quick.]

Was the dispute over? The two ladies, Tricia and Marquia came closer.

Tirnanog quickly hid in the tablecloth.

"Thank you for waiting, Erica-sama. Marquia is a terribly indecisive person."

"Oh my, I wonder if you forgot about the thing just a while ago. It was Tricia who was stupid, you know?"

"Yes, yes. I will not run away, so please feel at ease."

However, this might make it difficult for me to move around.

Well, what should I do.

Just when I was in trouble from being caught by two lovely ladies, a girl who stood out from a group of Harvan noblemen appeared.

My eyes met with the girl, I smiled.

I knew her well.

She was Ann Harvan, it was a relationship where we were caught in a point between life and death about a month and a half ago.

Ann was dressed in a mature black dress.

At first glance it seemed to be somewhat plain, but when I looked closely it had elaborate laces and embroidery sewed on it.

She also wore a corsage that looked like a light-red flower that suited her well.

Every time Ann moved, the silver thread was sparkling with the light of the chandelier. Her face looked a bit more mature than before and I could see a glimpse of cool and sharp beauty.

“Long time no see, Erica-oneesama. I have wanted to see you since forever.”

“Well, Ann-sama. I’m happy to meet you too.”

I smiled and welcomed her.

At that time, I felt Tricia and Marquia grabbed my sleeves tightly on both sides of me.

“Well, what an impudent little girl. We were talking to Erica-sama first, you know?”

“That’s such a poor dress, you don’t deserve to stand in front of Erica-sama. You can turnover and leave.”

Oops, did they see Ann as a rival?

I tried to open my mouth, but I was unable to interrupt their conversation and couldn’t make a word.

“By the way, I am a Baroness of Aurelia the same as Erica-sama. Same as Erica-sama!”

“By the way, I am the daughter of a Viscount of Ignitia. Daughter of a *Viscount*!”

The two who seemed to have set Ann as a common enemy cornered Ann who was one

year younger.

While I was looking at the three of them in bewilderment in trying to mediate, my eyes met with Ann's.

Ann smiled lightly and gestured for them to calm down by raising her hand.

"The crest of three ships sailing on the quadruple wave... You must be the daughter of Baron Rails of Aurelia, right?"

"Uh!? Yes, I am Tricia Rails... why do you know the emblem of our house?"

"Emblem of sword crossing a sleeping white dragon... You must be the daughter of the Viscount Jonas of Ignitia, right?"

"Guh... Certainly, I am Marquia Jonas. But, that's rude. We had introduced ourselves before you."

Oh~, how amazing.

As expected of the younger sister of that diligent person Klaus, her preparation was perfect.

Ann smiled in full composure, casually removing her hand which was hiding the Harvan's coat of arms.

"Excuse me for the late introduction. My name is Ann from Duke of Harvan. Tricia-sama, Marquia-sama, let's get along from now on."

Ann introduced herself with a carrying voice in spite of being a child, and bowed with a perfect manner.

Tricia and Marquia held their half-opened mouths and became rigid for a while.

Unexpectedly, the two of them went a step backward and bowed deeply.

"I didn't know that you are the princess of the former royal family Harvan, please forgive my impoliteness!"

"Hii...! It's an honor to meet someone of a high social standing such as you, I am extremely delighted!"

"After all you don't need to be sorry, it's not like the two of you were bullying me. Please, raise your heads."

Ann turned her smile which was full of composure towards them.

"It is a fact that I have disturbed the two of you, we are even with each other now. The three of us like Erica-oneesama, so let bygones be bygones. Let's get along well on equal terms, alright?"

"Y-yes!"

"Excuse us!"

Although she said 'on equal terms', it seemed that the rank had been decided firmly. Both Tricia and Marquia were totally obedient to Ann.

Ann-sama, what an amazing young lady.

I felt like I had been shown the skill of an artisan.

When Ann approached me calmly, Tricia and Marquia moved back one step further. Ann looked up at me, leaning close to me.

"Erica-oneesama, I have wanted to talk to you all this time. I still cannot forget about that night, my heart will beat faster every time I remember it."

"...Ann-sama, there are other people here."

"Oh, yes, that thing is our secret, isn't it?"

"...Ann-sama, the bad part about having an audience is not just that."

At a glance, when I looked at Tricia and Marquia, they stealthily averted their eyes away.

Why were their cheeks red?

As expected, was it getting misunderstood in such a way?

"That was wrong, we were only exploring the underground ruins together and knocked

down the evil spirit!" It was painful that I couldn't say that.

"By the way, Erica-oneesama, did you receive the gift properly?"

"Yes, I did. It was very delicious. Thank you very much."

"Wasn't it? I knew that Erica-oneesama will like it. If you come to Harvan, you can eat delicious meat everyday!"

"That is nice. If I had a business in Harvan, I will certainly take you up on that offer."

Klaus aside, Ann seemed to welcome me properly so I was glad.

I was also interested in Harvan's delicacies where food culture seemed to be progressing.

Let's expect it when we go to Harvan for some occasion.

Oops, now that we were on that point, I would like to ask about Klaus' letter.

"Excuse me... about Klaus-sama..."

"Yes! It's about Onii-sama! Please ask me anything!"

"I got a strange letter... Did I do something to make Klaus-sama angry, did I do something like lighting a fire on his fighting spirit?"

"Strange letter...? That, when did it arrive?"

Ann had a slight wrinkle between her eyebrows.

As usual, her attitude towards her brother seemed to be harsh.

"It was a letter enclosed with the gift from Ann-sama."

"Enclosed... eh, no way... no matter how stupid Onii-sama is... By the way, what is the content?"

"You are strong. I will become a man who will not lose to you."

"No way... Onii-sama...!?"

Ann-sama seemed to collapse backwards as if it caused anemia for a moment.

I tried to support her in a panic, but she picked herself up immediately and breathed in deeply.

“Was it a letter of challenge as I expected?”

“No. That letter was supposed to convey another intention. It may seem like a letter of challenge with only few words, but it wasn’t. So please trust Onii-sama. Give my older brother another chance.”

Well, I didn’t know the details, but I guessed that letter was a mistake?

That was good, it wasn’t a letter of challenge.

I was really relieved.

“I’m glad. I want to be friends with Klaus-sama. He’s welcome to rewrite it.”

“Thank you very much. Erica-oneesama is not only beautiful like a goddess, but also kind like a goddess.”

“You’re exaggerating, Ann-sama... It’s embarrassing...”

Shortly after I said such a thing, high-pitched cheers shouted from nearby.

Those were the voices of the two young ladies who accompanied me just a few moments earlier.

“Kya~! Who is that? That one over there!”

“Kya~! Kya~! He looks like the prince from fairy tales!”

Tricia and Marquia were screaming excitedly.

It seemed that not only them but also a few older sisters were enchanted by one boy.

The black haired boy turned over.

Oh, what. Was that Klaus?

Klaus, like his sister, seemed to grow in this short period we didn’t see each other.

The refreshing feeling that didn't have any cloudiness of that time was hidden, his blue eyes that were tinged with sadness were impressive.

At first sight, he was wearing elaborate clothing.

The gray-almost-black robe was not the practical clothing I saw a month ago, but it was a luxurious clothing with silver embroidery on the glossy luxurious woollen fabric.

The chest brooch and cuffs were silver moon, similar to the pattern of Harvan's coat of arms.

Beside that, refined craftsmanship was applied on various places.

As expected of Klaus, when he came to the feast organized by the royal family, he was smartly dressed.

Even though it was a fancy costume, it didn't feel frivolous.

Rather, the costume kept to a modest color tone while still felt fresh, which complemented Klaus himself.

If I didn't know the contents, I might have shouted 'Kya~!'

"He didn't seem to be too far apart from our age, I didn't think there is such a beautiful gentleman!"

"Hee-..., sounds good-..."

"W-what should we do now, Erica-sama! That gentleman, he is coming over here!"

"Hee-..., I see-..."

"I am excited, my heart is beating fast! Aah, I wonder if this is a dream!"

"Hee-..., it might be so-..."

Although I could answer in a vague manner appropriately, my heart was beating fast inside of me.

Yet, as Tricia and Marquia held down both sides of me, I couldn't escape.

While I was worrying about it, Klaus came in front of me.

He was a little awkward, but still smiling towards me.

“Lady Erica.”

“Ah, yes. Klaus-sama.”

“While we haven’t seen each other for a while, it looks like you got even more beautiful. It is worth the journey here all the way to Ignitia.”

“Klaus-sama’s character has collapsed... oops, I mean, your personality has changed.”

“That is harsh. Does it not suit me?”

Klaus laughed naturally this time, and I was lured into smiling too.

Yeah, the good vibes from this situation warmed me up.

As I thought so, Klaus behaved unexpectedly.

Like a knight to a lady, he kneeled in front of me and took my hand.

(W-what are you doing—!)

Instead of my silent scream, Tricia and Marquia’s happy ‘KYA~!!’ echoed in the hall.

“Erica Aurelia. Please, will you give me the honor to do the first dance with you?”

“Eeeeh!?”

While looking around in confusion, my eyes met with Ann’s proud gaze.

(Ah, I understand. This is a report on the results of Ann’s training. Good job.)

Because the contents were those of a ramping horse, it seemed that it was dangerous to display in front of an unknown person.

As it was, I was supposed to serve as a poison tester.

“Excuse me, Klaus-sama. I will be pleased to accept your offer.”

I took up a lady-like gesture, bowed down while holding my dress' skirt. Again, Tricia and Marquia's high-pitched cheers resounded and entered the ears of the surrounding adults.

Oops, this was embarrassing.

However, if I was to do my society debut, I had to endure this and try hard.

It seemed that Klaus also felt embarrassed of being seen, he was looking at me with his ears turning red.

"Let's go, Erica."

"Your real character is showing, Klaus-sama."

"Shut up."

Klaus quickly pulled my hand and we went into the circle of dancers.

Chapter 26

Island of Messenger (8)

Klaus aimed at the center of the hall, pulled my hand and walked a little.

Due to the relationship between the dukes' children, I felt that we were gaining extra attention.

When I was conscious of the attention, my face somehow stiffened.

“What, are you nervous?”

“Well, I am inexperienced about this. Does Klaus-sama also feel nervous? Or feel embarrassed? Your face is bright red.”

“Hm... it's due to the lighting.”

We conversed with each other in low voices while holding hand and facing each other.

At the timing when we tried to step, suddenly the melody became weirdly romantic.

Oops, even though I was unfamiliar with the music of Ignitia.

(Hii, court musicians! Don't make this harder for me!)

I had a bad footstep, I moved to avoid stepping on Klaus or other people's foot.

Klaus skilfully made an ad-lib and corrected my uncertain step to a good condition.

“Klaus-sama, perhaps, you are a good dancer?”

“I've got plenty of practice with Ann. Hey, don't look at your feet too much. On the contrary, it will be easier for you to fall down.”

“Eh, yes.”

Apparently, Klaus would take the lead.

I was honestly saved.

I didn't have experience in dancing, since until now I was always carried or piggybacked by Onii-sama.

"Look at me and don't look down."

"Ah, yes, Klaus-sama."

"No, your face is too close like this. Don't look at me after all. Look at some place over my shoulder. My rhythm becomes amiss."

Klaus continued to issue instructions that made it difficult to measure his intentions.

This aspect about him didn't change that much, huh.

"Klaus-sama, your order is very detailed."

"For now, place your trust in me and rely on me. I cannot disgrace you."

As he said, Klaus was good at this.

While enjoying the music, I was able to dance a song without mistakes.

In this way, it would be safe for him to dance with other ladies.

I thought that my role would end here and bowed to leave, but Klaus grasped my arms and stopped me.

"Just a little bit longer, is it alright?"

The next song began as it was, and I was moving my body according to Klaus' lead.

"Klaus-sama, don't you have to dance with other people?"

"I came to see you. Why do I have to dance with other girls?"

"It will be the duty of a duke, right? You need to deepen your friendship with other people at work, right?"

"Harvan's eldest son is on break."

Klaus brought his lips to my ears and spoke in a low voice.

“I can’t say it with a loud voice, but I’m investigating the case that is the imperial command of the royal family. The boss of the investigation team is an excessively nasty, harsh guy. I said to that inhuman boss that it was unreasonable and to let me go through, this is my precious free time.”

“You are following a strict person, aren’t you? Oh, is that the case of the grave robbery?”

The investigation of the grave robbery should have been done at the initiative of the Duke of Harvan.

I thought that the word ‘inhuman’ didn’t suit the Harvan official.

“No, it’s different from the grave robbery.”

“Then, what are you investigating?”

“It’s not something we can say here, in the first place I was threatened by my boss to ensure that you never thrust your neck into danger... I forgot to mention, that boss, is your older brother.”

“Hii-.”

“...Even now, I want to compensate a little. So that I don’t have to redraw the map of the Duchy of Harvan.”¹

As expected, Eduart-oniisama.

He didn’t even forgive a 10-years-old child...

Aah, but, it might be an opportunity to add labor as a mean of repayment.

“In such precious free time, you do not need to bother dancing with me...”

“...You, did you read my letter?”

“Yes, I read it... but what is that letter?”

According to what I heard from Ann, it should have been a mistake.

Would corrections come in? What kind of letter was that supposed to be?
Somehow, while I was thinking in a carefree way, he said something disturbing.

“About what I wrote in that letter, I’m serious.”

“Ehh? What, you’re serious?”

“Very.”

Umm, it was ‘*You are strong. I will be a man who will not lose to you.*’

He was very serious about that—

As expected, was that a letter of challenge?

What did you mean, Ann-sama?

Shouldn’t it be a mistake?

I mean, was it really a challenge from the genius mage who could knock down such a monster?

School life would be in hard mode no matter how I thought about it.

Hah! Wait!

I might seem weak in my previous life, but this me was in fact not timid.

If I maxed the confident aspect of the villain specification, even if it was only appearance, there would never be a time when people make light of me.

If I showed a bit of courage and struck against him confidently, would I manage to do something?

Rather, it might be a matter of urgency to give the impression that I was a skilled person.

After worrying about it, I responded while choosing the words carefully.

“Klaus-sama. Um, honestly it was annoying.”

“Wha-...”

“I am not a type like Klaus-sama. Could you please stop that brute force approach?”

“Uh...”

“What Klaus-sama asking for is too heavy for me. But, it’s okay. Klaus-sama ought to find an opponent suitable for yourself. I will pray for Klaus-sama to have a good encounter.”

“Pray...!?”

“I’d like to be friends with Klaus-sama.”

“Friends... huh... uugh...”

“Um, are you listening?”

“...”

“Klaus-sama? Klaus-sama?”

“...”

There was no reply.

Klaus seemed to be in a state of emptiness.

With movements as if sleepwalking, he seemed to dance in an unconscious state, it was surreal...

I felt sorry for some reason, but with this Klaus wouldn’t be aiming me as a rival or suddenly challenging me to a battle.

Sorry, Klaus.

Choose Eduart-oniisama or someone else who could be a formidable enemy while still being friends with you.

Maybe, I believed I beat him.

I bowed away from Klaus now that the song had switched.

Klaus remained in the center of the hall, still in the state of emptiness.

While I was worrying about what to do, girls of the same age surrounded Klaus and started competing for him.

(Sorry, Klaus, I don’t have the ability to fight with other ladies like Ann.)

It was dangerous to provoke someone who was jealous and wanted to monopolize you.

I had an over capacity of rough loves in my previous life, so I didn't want to get involved anymore.

Giving a backward glance at the competition for Klaus, I sneakily escaped.

¹ Referring to the situation when Klaus consumed many wands and magic recovery potions of Eduart. To cover the deficit, it seems that Klaus had to sell a few forests of Harvan, so to avoid that, Klaus now is working for Eduart.

Just when Ann resolved the misunderstanding, Klaus dug a grave for himself. Apparently, he thought what he sent is a love letter :")

If he thought that was a romantic love letter, what would the actual letter of challenge look like?

...Also, can we have an ambulance for Klaus, please? I think he needs to be put in an emergency room. That was a critical strike if I ever see one. *wipe away tears*

Chapter 27

Island of Messenger (9)

I looked at the distant scenery, where the absentminded Klaus was swarmed by the girls.

This was similar to something.

...Piranha?

While thinking a pretty rude thing, I escaped the area gracefully.

It seemed that Tricia and Marquia who I made friends with some time ago were in the group that was currently surrounding Klaus.

What should I do?

Would Ann take care of it?

Just as I thought so, I saw Ann heading towards that direction to rescue Klaus.

She wasn't afraid of a group of ten or more ladies who were older than herself.

So strong, huh~.

I also had to emulate Ann a little.

Well, I was going to have a relaxing meal with Tirnanog.

When I thought so, I was spoken to by another person.

“You are Erica-sama, daughter of the Aurelia official, huh.”

It was a boy who had dark violet eyes with long platinum blonde hair which I recognized as the characteristics of Ignitia's people at a glance, along with a small purple dragon.

He looked like about 12 or 14 years old.

By the way, he resembled one of the royal aristocrats of Ignitia who were surrounding

the King, Queen Consort, and Prince Auguste some time ago.

“Will you dance a single song with me?”

“...Yes, thank you for your consideration. How should I call you?”

It was pretty distracting to dance with such a stranger for the first time.

But I guessed he couldn't be refused carelessly, as he was someone from Ignitia.

“Oya? Do you not know about me? You can never do that, as someone who is a Duke's daughter.”

“Pardon me. This is my first time coming to the Kingdom, so I am not familiar with Ignitia's aristocrats.”

“There is no choice, I'll forgive you, Duke of Aurelia's daughter. My fame is not enough to reach the end of this continent's western region.”

I desperately soothe my cheeks that seemed to cramp.

Wasn't the introduction too long?

Somehow it felt like the self-proclaimed angel prince, when I met him in an unofficial place.

What's wrong with him, at the banquet hall of the Royal Castle, he didn't give his name to someone who he invited to dance.

“Fufufu. Remember this. If you remember, it should be useful in the future. I am Louis Ode-Ignitia¹. I am the younger stepbrother of Margrave Charles Ode-Ignitia, who governs the Ignitia's territory in Karkinos, the City of Reconquest.”

Louis Ode-Ignitia.

I might have gained the attention of another troublesome person.

He was from Ode-Ignitia family, in other words, the branch family of Ignitia royal family.

Both Louis and Charles were cousins of Prince Auguste, and they also had the right to succeed the throne.

This person named Louis Ode-Ignitia was not posted on the website of [Liber Mostrorum] or the character booklet.

He didn't appear in the second scenario that I had played.

He was a man of Karkinos continent and wouldn't go to the magic academy at the same time as me.

My death flag was probably had nothing to do with this person... but he was from the royal family, even if it was just the branch family.

I felt troubled, but since he was from the royal family then I couldn't possibly ignore him.

I wore the mask of a Duchess as tightly as possible.

I took the hand presented by Louis and started dancing while being led by him.

He put his face closer to my ear and muttered.

“You are an interesting girl. I heard of it. According to that, Augoste is an angel, huh?”

Uh... after all, just who was around that time?

My black history was exposed quickly.

I felt the muscles of my face stiffened.

However, outwardly I smiled back with a piece of thin skin.

“That's right. But Prince Augoste was so beautiful that I mistook him for an angel.”

I didn't know what led to me being eaten alive and what not restricted, or to what extent people were listening to this.

Since it would be troublesome if they ironically happened, I would force myself to push through this.

Louis then twirled strands of my hair twice, keeping the angle of his face slanted, and made a sidelong glance.

“‘Beautiful’ is usually said to someone like me, Milady.”

“...Is that so, Louis-sama.”

I was about to draw away from him, but I managed to bear it somehow.

I wondered if this person was a narcissist.

Certainly Louis was also a beauty, but I thought that he was inconspicuous among Ignitia royalty that was entirely made of beautiful people.

“Hahaha, but, Duke Aurelia’s daughter. No matter how much he is beautiful, you shouldn’t approach that prince.”

“Is that so, Louis-sama.”

“Prince Auguste is, how should I put this... he is a thorny rose. Even if he is beautiful, if you touch it, it will hurt your hand and make you bleed. Have you heard of one or two of his rumors?”

“No, I do not like such rumors—”

“No, no! Wait a moment! The prince’s rumors, they were not rumors that could be talked about in a place like this! You do not know who could be listening!”

The one who brought up the topic was Louis himself.

Besides, in such a loud voice, I had the impression that the surrounding people made strange rumors about me.

Perhaps he thought that he could easily deceive an 8-years-old girl into believing the rumors.

I wondered if the original Erica didn’t question the rumors about Auguste.

“I think I want to get along with Prince Auguste, but the prince seems to hate me. I was going to train the poor boy who cannot ride a dragon yet, but he will not go out with me at all. It is a pitiful story, even though we are cousins.”

“That’s unbelievable, Louis-sama.”

Louis seemed to positively hate Auguste.

Or, did he think that Auguste was in the way as a rival over the succession to the throne?

Either way, he would like to take advantage of the bad rumors and made Auguste's position worse.

This was troubling.

If I agreed then it was likely to be spread around that the Duchess of Aurelia was a friend of Louis by the surroundings, and if I disagreed then he would loudly speak of the opposite things to manipulate a different impression.

I would do my utmost to make it clear properly.

“Prince Auguste has been totally distorted in the past few years. I am anxious and can't help worrying. I want to be friends with that poor friendless child. I am a gentle person so I want to be friends with everyone.”

“Me too, Prince Auguste is not a person like the rumor. If you are going to become friends with him, I also—”

“You had better quit it! Prince Auguste is rough, I do not know what to do if a defenceless little girl like you approached him.”

“Is that so, Louis-sama.”

It was becoming painful to keep wearing the mask of a Duke's daughter.

How long would the evil mouth continue while pretending to care about Prince Auguste?

With this kind of people surrounding him, I felt that it would be understandable for Prince Auguste to become similar to an alabaster statue.

While doing such conversation that seemed to hurt my stomach, Louis held my hand and I was going to make a turn... at that time.

“Who are you! To steal the dance partner of another person...!”

Louis' voice was heard from behind, not in front of me.

In retrospect, Louis was a little far away, stiffening with his hand out in the air sporting a strange expression.

Then, who was this person taking my hand?

The one in front of me was a tall person who hid their face with a mask that usually could be seen in a masquerade ball.

They were wearing Ignitia's nobility costume, a hat with feathers, golden mantle embroidered with golden thread, and boots with high heels.

Blond hair was spilled out from under their hat.

Who was it?

I felt like we had met somewhere.

"Pardon me. I thought whether the princess was bored because it was such a tedious step that I felt like yawning."

"What did you say!? That statement, do you know that I am Louis Ode-Ignitia!"

"Hmm~? Ode-Ignitia? Never heard of that name. Is that a name of a rural nobility somewhere in the country?"

"This... this plebeian! There was no need to say that!!"

Louis became indignant by the insulting words and provocations.

Beyond the mask, eyes similar to those of a mischievous child were laughing.

"Perhaps, you are..."

"Then, I will take the princess away"

The person took off their mantle lightly and held it over us as if to obstruct Louis' line of sight.

In a short period of time while the mantle was slowly falling down from the air, the masked person moved quickly like a lightning bolt.

They put a black hair wig on my head and hid the characteristic golden hair.
Hung a gray robe on my shoulders and hid the luxurious blue dress.
With the quick work of the masked person, I quickly turned into a figure of a Harvan's aristocrat.

The masked person themselves took off their hat and mask and freed their covered hair.

When a mantle was wrapped around their waist like a wraparound skirt and worn a veil with a plain color, that person quickly tuned into a figure of a woman in a dress.

Those changes only took a few seconds.

The surrounding people who were watching the series of movements were surprised and opened their mouths blankly.

To Louis' line of sight who was behind the mantle, we would have seemed as if we disappeared.

“You are... Devil-san?”

“Shh, please be quiet.”

That person who took off the mask was the self-proclaimed Devil-san who I met in the depths of the cathedral.

Right now she had lowered her skin's exposure and was wearing a dress with modest hues like a maid.

I only saw a man until a while ago, it was like magic.

She pulled me, who was in a completely plain appearance, as she moved away from the circle of dancers.

❖❖❖

Brought by Devil-san, I reached an unpopular terrace.

There seemed to be only one cloud in the sky, the starry night sky spread out.

The sea around Island of Messenger seemed calm, and the light of the stars was reflected on the calm water surface like a mirror, shining brightly.

It looked as if the castle was floating in outer space.

With such a fantastic sight, Prince Auguste who had a lonely smile was standing there.

¹ オ ドイグニシア (Odoignitia) but it is spelled as Ode-Ignitia. The author said she had the image of 'the land where the song of the dragons echoes' when she named it that.

Chapter 28

Island of Messenger (10)

“Ufufu~, well then, see you later. Auguste, please apologize properly, okay~?”

Devil-san and Goldberry who jumped on her shoulder winked casually.

Somehow, they were in a perfect sync.

While I was stunned, the pair of a person and a dragon had disappeared behind the door.

She was truly an elusive person.

When I felt a little awkward, I heard the steps of Auguste.

As expected he seemed to be uncomfortable.

“Greetings, Angel-sama.”

“I’m sorry. You are angry after all.”

“Yes, I am a little bit angry.”

Auguste smiled as if troubled, and took one step closer.

Without thinking, I took a step backward.

He turned his eyes away from me with a smile on his face.

Although his smile got deeper, at the same time I felt like he became more depressed.

“Yeah, but, that may be the right decision. The boy called ‘Angel’ never existed... besides, you wouldn’t want to come into contact with a strange person like me.”

“Why would you think so?”

“If you get along with me, Erica-ojousan would get surrounded by bad rumors.”

Auguste said so with a smile that had no hesitation on his face.

The lack of dark shadow of depression in his expression only made it clearer to me that he was deeply sad.

With a smiling poker face, the Foolish Prince who covered his heart with a massive wall seemed to have been completed by this time.

“I’m sorry. Thank you. It’s only one day and I already messed it up, but still I had a lot of fun today thanks to you.”

“Then, why were you like that?”

“If you know about myself, you will not treat me in the same easy-going manner as before. In addition...”

“In addition?”

“An angel cannot become an angel if his identity was exposed. That’s the rule.”

Auguste attached his index finger to his lips and smiled with a face like a mischievous child.

Only at that moment, I felt that the Angel-san who I met in the cathedral came back.

But Auguste soon turned his heel, so the Angel-san disappeared beyond his lonely back.

“Does Prince Auguste want to be an angel?”

“I could be either an angel or a devil as long as I could fly in the sky.”

He looked up at the night sky.

I couldn’t see his expression, but surely he was smiling as if he was really craving for it.

Even if he was sad and there was no tear coming out, I could sense his longing.

“Do you want to fly in the sky?”

“I want to fly.”

A surprisingly strong voice responded.

He stretched his trembling hands to the far away sky that he couldn't reach.

"I want to fly. I really want to fly. If I could fly in the sky... as long as I can fly in the sky, everything will be restored and everything will go well."

"Auguste-sama..."

"Oh... it's a story that had nothing to do with Erica-jousan."

Looking back to me, Auguste became the alabaster statue prince who had fixed the mask of a deep smile on his face.

"While I am on the ground, my heart belongs to the sky as a dragon knight of the South. I am damaged as a dragon knight, but I am the same as other dragon knights who yearn for the sky."

With a slight chest pain, I was convinced.

This person, Auguste, would give everything to fly.

His craving would make him to finally reach out for the contract beast by means of black magic.

But even if he made a contract, if he fused with the beast, only destruction would be waiting for him.

Even if he knew that he would completely lose his ability to ride a dragon by the beast's runaway six years in the future, he definitely would not stop.

"The story has diverted. Well, that is why. I apologize for keeping you here."

"It's alright..."

He became unapproachable.

It would be difficult to break through the thick wall of his heart.

At that time, unexpectedly, the sound of a string instrument could be heard. It was even louder than the Ignitia's music in the hall. It was not the contemporary tune which was mixed in Harvan and Aurelia's songs, but somehow it was a foreign sound. It probably was an arrangement that was still a prototype. I could hear a random humming that was mixed with the calming string instrument solo.

“This voice, Devil-san?”

“That woman... that meddling woman...”

“Uwah, that person, she can play instruments... she's very deft.”

“Aah, it's because that person – Palug – can do anything.”

Auguste, who forgot to put on a smile, made a bitter face.

That was a somewhat strange conversation, but now his face looked much more natural.

“Aah, I can't do this. I messed up. I was trying to make a clean break...”

“Auguste-sama?”

“Sorry. Erica. I cannot give up on you. As expected, I want to stay together with you.”

“That...”

Auguste took my hands and looked into my eyes.

He looked uneasy.

“I understand. As a comrade with few friends, let's get along well.”

“Comrade with few friends', you mean...”

“Oh? Auguste-sama, Devil-san – I'm sorry, it's Palug-san, right? Do you have any friend besides her?”

“...Goldberry.”

“What about *human* friends?”

“I understand. I give up. Yes, I have few friends.”

Auguste raised his hands with an expression as if he swallowed a bitter pill.

“Well, if we become friends, then the number of friends is 1.5 at a stroke.”

“Wow, that’s a rough magic number... but, is it really okay?”

“Huh? You don’t want to? That’s unfortunate. Then I will pray for Auguste-sama to make a more suitable friend.”

“No, no, I do not dislike it at all. I would like to ask you to become my friend from the bottom of my heart.”

He laughed hard and grabbed my hand.

Even though he was in a similar situation as me, it would be much better than the friendless condition.

I knew how difficult it was to be isolated.

When the rumors that I ‘slept with all the club members’ in my previous life was spread, I remembered that I couldn’t even laugh.

No, far from laughing, I couldn’t even get angry.

My childhood friend who attended another school couldn’t bear it and got angry instead of me *‘They are the lowest. Even being the lowest should have a limit!’*

“But, so Erica also has a few friends, huh.”

“Yes. But, is that a problem? To only have a few close friends.”

“Nope, no problem. I agree with that idea.”

Auguste who was narrowing his eyes as he laughed looked very innocent.

I really wanted to be a friend that could help Auguste at the time of emergency.

As I was thinking such a thing, the tune of the string instrument became somewhat hurried.

I could hear the singing sound of Goldberry as well.

“That woman, is she watching from somewhere?”

“There is only starlight, I really don’t understand.”

“In other words, I mean something like this...”

When Auguste straightened his shoulders, he changed the way he was holding my hand and kneeled before me.

“Lady Erica. Would you please dance with me?”

“Yes. It would be my pleasure.”

“I’m sorry. That woman, she really likes to meddle unnecessarily.”

“Ahaha.”

With Auguste’s lead, we started to dance.

Dancing under the starlight, just the two of us.

Only the devil and the dragon as spectators.

However, Auguste seemed to be more lively than the banquet hall, which was full of people.

“You seem to be having fun, even though we have only started dancing.”

“Oops, you caught me. Actually, ever since Erica was dancing with the Harvan’s mage, I was envious.”

“You saw that?”

“Yeah. I saw. Along with your dangerous steps which were likely to step on the foot of your opponent.”

“Ahaha. How embarrassing...”

Auguste danced with a happy expression.

His movements were light, and his steps were certain.

Surely, he practiced with Palug or the Queen.

“I was envious. I also wanted to dance with you. It’s amazingly fun now. Ah~, how nice it is to speak honestly.”

“I agree. Telling a lie makes you feel tired.”

“Right~. Every day is completely exhausting. Let’s be an honest man only in front of Erica.”

“For example?”

“I want to fly. I want to fly. I want to fly, I want to fly, I want to fly.”

Unlike the monologue that seemed to be painful a little while ago, he shouted his heartfelt wish.

This man really wanted to fly in the sky.

“Also, I like you.”

“Eh, I will be troubled if you suddenly said that.”

“Eh, but I’d like to be friends.”

Oops, I was surprised.

I thought, *‘What was this man saying suddenly?’*

But, I wondered why a person who wants to fly so much like him couldn’t fly.

“By the way, why can’t you fly, Auguste-sama?”

“Oh...”

Auguste was speechless for a moment.

I felt a bit insensitive, no, I had said considerably insensitive things.

“Such a thing, maybe it was my first time hearing that told to my face directly. Wow~.

It's fresh~."

"Uh, was it rude?"

"No, it was refreshing. I was treated very cautiously all the time."

"Wow, then I was terribly insensitive, huh."

"I guess I might like that kind of insensitive person."

"Uu."

This time I was the one who was speechless.

Ah, it was insensitive after all.

Let's be careful next time not to hurt others.

As I was thinking about such a thing, Auguste began to say something else abruptly.

"The sleeping princesses will not wake up."

He said a somewhat poetic expression, but what did he mean?

"Of my three dragons, except the eldest sister Goldberry, do not hatch from their eggs."

"Have you tried kissing them?"

"No, I have tried to at least kiss them a lot. But they do not wake up."

"You did it?"

A prince kissing an egg, huh.

It felt kind of surreal?

Ah, but it might paint a surprising picture.

Because everything beautiful people did would be forgiven, how hateful.

"The royal aristocracy of Ignitia is given a dragon egg when they were born. Only once they hatched the egg, raised the dragon, and rode it that they could be called an adult."

"Don't you have Goldberry?"

“That girl is a small dragon for self-defence. She’s not going to grow bigger. Her two younger step-sisters should be larger.”

“I see.”

“I have decided their names. Red dragon Briar, white dragon Blumbell. I’m sure they will grow up into beautiful women.”

Somehow, Auguste said that with an expression similar to Eduart-oniisama’s when he was boasting about me.

This might be a different type of siscon...

“Perhaps, you cannot ride on the dragon because of that?”

“That’s correct. As a royal family, this is an unusual situation. I don’t know why my eggs will not hatch... So, at the very least I want to be able to ride on a general purpose dragon.”

“Is it difficult?”

“It is. So nobility raises dedicated dragons from eggs. I was also told that I can wait until Briar and Blumbell hatch.”

“But you cannot wait?”

“I can’t.”

Auguste put his hands around my waist, lifted me and turned me around.

I was slightly surprised.

But, after all he was a dragon knight apprentice, he had trained himself.

I understood well about the stability of his legs as we were dancing together like this.

“I asked the guys in the magic academy where they studied the dragons’ ecology. My father and my grandfather also flew in the sky on the age of seven.”

“But Auguste-sama, you are already ten years old.”

“I do not want to be a genius rider like my father. I just don’t want people to think that the child of a genius is incompetent.”

Just as we finished doing a turn, the song ended.

We just stared at each other with our hands still connected.

“And more than that, I want to protect my mother’s honor. I want to prove that the blood of the royal family is flowing within me by riding a dragon.”

“Auguste-sama...”

Behind him, the stars were reflected in the mirror-like sea, I didn’t know whether the stars that I saw were on the sky or in the sea.

I thought it was beautiful.

But—

“Siscon and mothercon, it is a rather deep problem.”

“Sis... what?”

“Oops...”

Dangerous, I carelessly ran my mouth off.

“Just now, did you say something rude? Was it only my imagination? Can you stare into my eyes properly and say it again?”

“Nothing. It was really nothing. Ah~, Augste-sama is really beautiful, huh~.”

Just in time, the grinning Palug-san turned up brimming with the intention to tease us.

Only during this time, the self-proclaimed devil looked like an angel.

Chapter 29

Island of Messenger (11)

It was the second day after we arrived at the Island of Messenger.

Tomorrow was the day when the jousting tournament would be held.

The Advent Festival seemed to be in the peak of excitement for the last few days and the town became more bustling.

I also got permission to go out today from Otou-sama.

So I decided to go out to the town with Tirnanog.

“I’m glad that Tir could eat lots of delicious things yesterday.”

[Umu. It is not enough for me to fill my belly, but my tongue is satisfied.]

“I may have eaten a bit too much yesterday.”

[So that’s why today you did not attend the garden party.]

Today’s garden party was not hosted by the royal family, instead it was the Marquis who was the Queen Consort’s deceased parents’ house who hosted it.

Rather it seemed to be an elderly noble-centered event.

Otou-sama had an invitation, but as for me, it was said that it was alright not to attend, so I took advantage of that offer to escape from that party.

“Well, that too.”

[Is it not because you do not want to meet that bad guy Louis you were talking with last night?]

“That is also true... but see, on the subject of the oracle, I’ve been thinking on how to change it a little.”

[Ah, I see.]

Tomorrow was the awaited day of the jousting tournament which could decide my fate.

There was only one more day left to avoid the flag.

However, the current death flag itself had already been almost avoided.

Auguste would participate in the tournament.

Auguste would fall from the dragon.

Erica would ridicule Auguste for his failure, or said something that caused a misunderstanding.

Through these three conditions, Erica would be selected as a victim of 'The St. Angel Anthropophagism Case' six years in the future.

So, there were several ways to prevent the death flag.

In other words, do not let Auguste participate in the tournament.

Auguste successfully rode on a dragon.

Even if Auguste fell from the dragon, do not ridicule him.

If it still happened, then beat the contract beast 'before Auguste made a contract with it' or 'before going back to Aurelia territory for some reason' might be acceptable.

Yes, the conditions were easy if I only wanted to avoid my destruction.

However, if I considered avoiding Auguste's destruction, this was not enough.

If Auguste fused with the contract beast, whichever route the heroine chose six years in the future, the beast would run rampant.

Even if the murders didn't occur, if the beast separated itself from Auguste, he definitely would lose his ability to ride on a dragon.

This was the scenario of Harold who was the third capture object, which could be inferred from Auguste being unable to ride on a dragon.

The future of Auguste as a dragon knight would be closed when he made a contract with the contract beast.

[You are also exposed to the destiny of destruction, but you can still think of helping others... but, if I think about it, you were the one who released this me that was originally sealed.]

“Somehow, there are things that I cannot ignore without particular reason. Because I had become friends with Auguste, it is all the more so.”

[I cannot understand this kind of thing at all... but, I do not dislike it.]

Tirnanog shrugged his shoulders and shook his head with a gesture as if saying ‘it couldn’t be helped.’

[Yosh, I understand. Let me help you when you want to defeat the contract beast.]

“Uwah, that’s most sweet of you... ah, but that’s certainly for the best. The chance to fall down from the dragon and feel desperate is not limited to this year’s tournament.”

For example, next year, someone might be ridiculed by falling down again.

Even then, it would be safer if the contract beast had already been knocked down.

The investigation strategy had been decided.

The aim was to discover where the contract beast was hidden in the Island of Messenger.

I couldn’t search all of the island in a day, but I knew someone who might know where the contract beast was.

It was Auguste.

If I asked him, he should know the approximate place where the contract beast was.

“So, I think I will go to the cathedral. If it is not in the cathedral, then the next place is the castle, I think?”

[Umu. I will keep quiet today.]

“Sorry, Tir”

[Don’t worry. Just by going out with my friend like this, I am happy.]

Tir said some embarrassing things.

While returning an embarrassed grin, my fist gently touched Tirnanog.

Along with my reliable partner, I headed for the cathedral.

✧✧✧

“Is Angel-sama in here~?”

I was walking while calling for Auguste in an unpopular section of the cathedral.

Even if I was heard by other people, since it was the Advent Festival and inside the cathedral, if they saw the situation where a child was calling for an angel, people would think of it as a surreal and charming scene.

I would keep it to myself that I acquired a great damage as the one I was searching for was smiling at me.

“Ah, Erica, you’re here. I’ve been waiting for you.”

Auguste looked up at the stained glass.

If I looked closely, this was the same place where we met yesterday.

I wondered if that stained glass was his favorite design.

“How did you know that I will come?”

“Because there is a friend with keen hearing.”

“Ah, did you ask Palug-san?”

That person was mostly a mysterious person, wasn’t she?

Who was she?

An escort? An attendant? Somehow she felt different.

“Oh, today you are a daughter of a merchant’s house, huh. The ribbon suits you as well.”

“Thank you very much.”

Today, I tried dressing as a wealthy merchant’s daughter for sightseeing.

Blue skirt with white shirt, and blue ribbon.

I was aiming for a coordination that looked like Alice in Wonderland.

It was considerably more functional than the noble lady’s costume, especially the footwear.

“What do you want to do today? Would you like to see not only the cathedral but other church buildings? Or, should I show you around the city?”

“That’s right...”

What should I do?

How should I ask for information on the contract beast?

While thinking that way, I noticed a strange thing for the first time since I was standing in front of the stained glass next to Auguste.

“This... is there almost no blue color? Even though there are plenty of beautiful red and yellow colors.”

“Aah, it seems that the colorant to make superior blue glasses is Gigantia’s specialty. There are old blue glasses, but they are gradually becoming impossible to repair.”

“I see...”

Gigantia was the enemy country of the Union Kingdom.

It was a country of the Karkinos continent, which had been continuing the Giant War with our continent for a long time.

Even though currently we were in a cease-fire, our relationship with Gigantia was not good.

Because of that, the products of Gigantia would naturally become more valuable.

“Every church is having trouble with it. The colorant seems to be traded at twenty times the price of silver of the same weight.”

“Uwah~, it’s an unscrupulous business law.”

“Well, with regard to this stained glass, since the subject is the sun, it does manage to have some blue.”

In the stained glass, the figures of an angel, the Founder King of Ignitia, and a beautiful sun were depicted.

Was this the scene of the founding myth?

I inadvertently became fascinated by it, but this was not the time for that.

I had to get the whereabouts of the contract beast.

“About today, is there any sightseeing about the contract beast?”

“Erica, you know about such minor monster as well. The contract beast is a monster that is only transmitted to the royal family of Ignitia, you know?”

“Some of the Ignitia’s royal family also married to the Aurelia. I think it was because of that I have heard about such a story.”

For the contract beast, the source of information was the walkthrough in my previous life.

However, I couldn’t say that, so I tried to bring out the past marriage relationships between our two families.

If he became wary, I couldn’t continue the investigation.

“They said any wishes will come true, that kind of miracle beast is only in the fairy tale~.”

“It is a fairy tale, huh.”

“Yeah, so it’s a completely fantasy beast that is neither a magical beast nor a phantom beast.”

No, no, Angel-sama.

That seemed to exist, that contract beast.

It seemed that it would fuse with you, according to [Liber Monstrorum].

If you didn't know, there wouldn't be a bloody incident.

“Are you interested in the contract beast?”

“Yes, it's my dream to see it.”

“Well, it's decided. Let's make a sightseeing tour of the contract beast today~. Now... if we don't narrow it down a little bit, we wouldn't be able to visit all the places today.”

“Eh... , is there a lot of places where the contract beast originated from?”

“Ah, although it is reported to the public as many different monsters, but to the royal family they are one monster of the same name.”

“Heeh, you seem familiar with it.”

“Well. I am the most familiar with it in the current royal family of Ignitia.”

Auguste seemed to be brimming with confidence.

“Yosh, let's start from the monster inside the cathedral.”

That said, Auguste started the sightseeing tour.

Tirnanog and I chased such Auguste and arrived in front of a mural which I hadn't seen so far.

It was a mural painting of a yellowish cat-like creature and a boy-like person.

Perhaps it was drawn a long time ago, but I felt that it was a technique that was more childish than a mural painting.

“This is the contract beast that always telling a riddle.”

“Telling a riddle...?”

“If you win in a riddle match with the contract beast, it would make one wish come true... that's why I was looking into this beast for a while.”

“Why?”

“Perhaps I will be able to ride a dragon if I wish for it to this contract beast.”

The fingers of Auguste traced the yellowish cat of the mural painting.

From his voice there was no severe brooding atmosphere, but I became worried.

You can't do that, Prince.

Because that was also the way to your destruction.

“But Auguste-sama, isn’t making a contract with the contract beast dangerous?”

“Yeah, they said that it will eat you if you lose in the riddle match. But, I guess it’s a hint that not only the part of the wishes that would come true.”

“Is that so?”

“However, it is a fictitious animal after all. It is too convenient. As long as you make a contract, whatever your wish is, it will come true.”

“Well, what does the old tale said?”

The old story of this kind of thing always contained a single truth.

Past experience’s rule of thumb — I took my lessons from the case of the legendary Zaratan, so I thought to pull out the exact truth.

“There are some stories but it has become scattered. There are two things that I know in a form of a proper story. First, it is a story about when a large number of people died in a pandemic disease, they asked for the contract beast to eat the disease.”

“I see...”

“Because the beast ate the disease, many people’s lives were saved. However, the contracted person had been swallowed by the beast in compensation. That person is enshrined as a saint... the shrine is located in the other city. There should be an opportunity to visit that shrine.”

“S-swallowed...”

Somehow, it seemed to imply my destiny.

I hoped that beast was not the kind to eat one person each time a wish came true.

“Another thing is that a boy suffering from a serpent’s harm made a contract with the

beast and gained the power to manipulate snakes. The contract beast had won the game with the King of Serpent and it had the right to control the serpent's clan."

"Controlling snakes, huh... somewhat niche..."

"In addition to fulfilling wishes, there are patterns that show it demands blood for compensation. The boy was about to be killed by the beast, but he made a contract that was convenient for human by winning the riddle match... that's what this mural is all about."

"The riddle match comes from here, huh."

"Aah, this beast was cursed by God, and it seems that it had no choice but to accept it if a riddle match was set up."

"It's a strange story, huh."

"No, it's a common story. If there is nothing like that, people cannot overcome such beast. It is surely the way God created it."

Certainly, I felt that the two choices to win against monsters of old tales were to either win by ability or by intelligence.

In other words, the contract beast would hear what you wanted to say if you win against it in a riddle match.

"Well then, let's go to the next one. First of all, the obelisk right outside this building."

Auguste said that and headed for the exit.

Tirnanog and I also followed after him.

While moving, I asked Auguste about the main problem.

"Does Auguste know about the location of the contract beast?"

"I wonder, if I knew about it, I would have made the contract a long time ago and my wish would have been fulfilled."

"That's true..."

At this time, Auguste wouldn't have any contact with both the place where the contract

beast was and the contract beast itself.

Did he conceal the fact that he was holding the hints to find it sooner, or would he discover definitive hints after this?

...I hoped this investigation didn't bring unnecessary trouble upon myself.

In the square in front of the cathedral, there was an obelisk about twice as tall as an adult's height.

I had seen the obelisk itself many times, but this was my first time hearing that it was related to the contract beast.

"I cannot say it with a loud voice, but the contract beast is also the goddess of the Ignitia's royal family. The obelisk pedestal is the only one since we united under the faith of God, but the pillars were made on the Karkinos continent during the ancient Romulus Empire era."

"There seems to be no place where the beast can hide."

"Ah, let's search the beast in the premise. Oh yeah, I think underneath the obelisk is hollow...?"

"That would be difficult..."

"Right. There is no air hole. There was an old poem that said the contract beast likes to sleep under the sun, so I thought that there was a possibility."

The obelisk stone had become a sundial.

The foundation of the inscription-carved pillar was made of a stone with a mark that marks the time.

In first glance, there seemed to be no mechanism that could move it, and it didn't sound hollow even if I hit it.

"There is no cavity in the pillar"

"Even though it is completely coated with stone, it somehow feels like a living creature—"

I didn't think there was anything, but my eyes met with Tirnanog's who was at my feet trying to say something.

[...?]

Now that I thought about it, there was a beast that was resurrected by something like 'destroy the monument and suddenly coming out of nowhere!'

"There is a possibility that the obelisk itself is the beast that was sealed in other dimension. If we have achieved a specific condition or offering for the resurrection, perhaps—"

"Somehow it is suddenly becoming more specific..."

"...I was only imagining a common hypothetical situation."

Actually though it was based on real experience.

But, it was impossible to seal a dangerous creature in such bustling area as long as there was nothing extra.

"Offerings..."

"You cannot try it."

"I won't. But, guessing from the old tales, the offerings are likely to be human flesh."

"Human flesh is impossible though."

Both of us were nodding in earnest.

After we were doing that and watching the obelisk for a while, Auguste hit his hand.

"Ah, that's right. This obelisk has a hidden point. In the surroundings it has been scraped off, but you can see there are traces where characters were carved a little, can't you?"

"Ah, that's true."

"We scraped off all the inscriptions of the era when we trusted the contract beast, and now there is only the God's hymn that was carved there. It seems that the remaining scriptures are left undone at that time."

"After all, they wanted to conceal a god who demanded human sacrifice to fulfill

people's wishes."

"I guess there must have been a fastidious person."

It was a precious clue.

With an expression that seemed to ooze out feelings, Auguste looked at the ancient characters that had almost disappeared.

"Well, next is—"

The contract beast tour continued after being prompted by Auguste.

The herbal workshop and the clinic were decorated to mimic the face of the cat monster as much as possible.

It was like *onigawara*¹ in Japan.

The decoration of a lynx eating the demon of ill-health was placed on the entrances and the parts of a building where water was circulated, it was said to be a lucky item to repel diseases by eating invading diseases.

There were traces of the contract beast in the stalls and other places as well.

The beast seemed to have been the guardian deity of children.

Amulets for pregnant women and infants were made with cat's eye were still sold here and there around the Island of Messenger.

In old temples and shrines, there were a great variety of remains of the contract beast.

An image of a monster with an instrument in hand, a mural painted with an anthropomorphized cat monster, a deep groove called the fingernail mark of the beast was attached to an old altar.

All of these were mysterious and interesting.

It was quite fun as a sightseeing tour, but I couldn't find the contract beast.

"I went to that herbal workshop, about two years ago."

“That was fun. There are plant specimens that I have never seen. I want some samples.”

The herbal workshop was my most favorite place I went around today.

The herbal medicinal garden attached to the herbal workshop at the monastery was especially interesting.

It was a treasure trove of rare plants brought in from Karkinos continent.

Some of the flowers had unique beauty, I also wanted to grow up.

“Erica is serious, huh.”

“I am more or less an alchemist in the making. I am interested in unusual materials.”

“Even though you’re still eight years old, you’re steadily becoming a great alchemist. Will Erica go to Leandez Magical Academy when you’re fourteen?”

“Yes... , there are many worries about it though.”

I told Auguste my lack of talent as an alchemist.

The magical power output in my body didn’t work well.

By having such condition, I couldn’t make many magic items including a wand.

“I see. Erica is having a difficulty too. I thought I’m the only one having a hard time.”

“Well, after all I am the second child, so I won’t have too many responsibilities. There is no heavy pressure like Auguste-sama.”

“Still, aren’t there many hardships if you cannot do what others can do normally?”

“That’s true... it is good for now, but if I thought about the mistakes I would make when I entered the academy...”

“It is difficult to be a poor student, huh. Especially when you have a high social status.”

It was a big leakage.

This kind of grumble was not something I should talk about with other people, I carelessly confided in him.

As expected, it was easier to talk if you had similar troubles, huh.

“Well, even if you feel depressed, it can’t be helped.”

“I guess so.”

“...That’s right, would you like to go to a special place later on?”

“A special place?”

I looked up at Auguste, and he only smiled sweetly.

“There is a secret room that only the royal family knows... ah, wait. Palug also knows about it.”

“Well, Palug-san is always together with you.”

“During the Advent Festival, it will be conspicuous if we are loitering around that area. How about we carry out the plan when the population diminishes slightly? If I’m not mistaken, the Aurelia will stay for long-term, right?”

“Yes. Even after the Advent Festival, we will remain here for a few days in relation to Otou-sama’s work.”

“Yosh. It’s decided.”

Before we knew it, the shadow of Auguste walking ahead was getting longer.

The bell that informed the evening time had resounded.

That said, I still didn’t know where the contract beast was.

Well, at least I knew that there was no dangerous beast in places that could be easily seen.

As I mentioned earlier, I was supposed to be able to stay even after the Advent Festival. I hoped to find and incapacitate it before returning home.

“Shall we go home soon? Won’t people be worry if it’s too late?”

“Yes.”

“Then, I will send you back to your temporary residence.”

On the way back to the Duke of Aurelia’s temporary residence, Auguste looked up to

the sky unexpectedly.

There was the figure of a dragon returning to the stable.

Auguste didn't say a word, he just kept staring at the sight.

As if looking at something radiant, he seemed to yearn for it.

Somehow, I felt uneasy.

“...Prince Auguste, please do not force yourself to participate in the tournament.”

“I won’t. There is no dragon to participate, and I cannot ride it in the first place.”

“I’m sure that you will be able to ride on a dragon one day, you will become a dragon knight.”

“Hahahaha. You say that easily.”

Auguste seemed to be desolate, he was laughing without power.

“It seems that people who are optimistic will go well at such times.”

“Optimistic, huh... you don’t need to tell me. Well then, optimistically, I’d like to ask Erica one thing.”

“Eh? What is it? Please tell me, I’ll help you if I can.”

“Really? Well then, I’ll take your kind offer—”

His arms suddenly blocked my progress.

I was pushed lightly as I stepped back until my back touched the wall.

Auguste came closer as he looked into my face as it was.

I instinctively leaned back, he fixed me in place by pressing my body against the wall.

“Erica, I want it... your...”

“Eh...?”

Oya?

Was this posture the 'Kabe-don' that I had heard so much rumors about?

This was the thing that Auguste did after his affection grew in the game.

However, the other party in that scene was Chloe, the original protagonist, not me.

After his affection grew, Auguste became even flashier.

Auguste was staring at me with serious eyes.

His supple fingers were attached to my chin.

My right hand was instantly searching for the Wand of Hold, but reconsidered it three times since I was reluctant to use it.

Auguste's hand that was on my chin turned sideways, and then he pulled out the ribbon that I used to tie my hair and pulled it out.

"Hm? Are you surprised? What did you imagine?"

"Wha—!?"

Auguste laughed while flipping the ribbon he stole from me.

"I was surprised! What are you doing suddenly to a lady!?"

"Rather, it is because you are a lady. For the sake of showing his devotion to the lady, the knight wears the lady's thing and flies through the sky, right?"

Auguste jokingly tied his hair with my ribbon.

It suited him very well.

This guy truly looked like a girl.

I couldn't believe it that he would become the host-type in the future.

But because I felt a bit frustrated, I would rebel.

“Please return it! I will not give it to a mean person!”

“N-o-w-a-y! Isn’t it fine, it’s not going to decrease anyway.”

“It is decreasing! My ribbon is decreasing by one!”

Auguste laughed happily, evaded my hand and ran away.

His expression looked like he was having fun, and my hand that was trying to take back the ribbon was hesitating.

I decided that this current lively Auguste was better than the alabaster statue one.

“Aren’t you my friend? Won’t you give me a ribbon?”

“Uh, that’s true, but—”

“Right. Then, it is decided!”

Auguste started running when I faltered.

I also chased after him.

“It’s a promise! I will definitely fly through the sky wearing this proof of our friendship!”

Auguste’s smile was sparkling in the evening sun.

He would wear my ribbon when he could ride on a dragon and fly in the sky.

I imagined the scene in my mind.

Surely, it would make me proud.

¹ Onigawara is a type of roof ornamentation found in Japanese architecture. They are generally roof tiles or statues depicting a Japanese ogre or a fearsome beast. Often found on Buddhist temples.

Chapter 30

Jousting Tournament (1)

It was the day of the jousting tournament using a dragon.

Before the tournament began, I decided to walk while looking at the wide variety of dragons from all over the world with my father.

A wide variety of dragons, from the orthodox colored dragons of red, blue, white, black, etc., to dragons with beautiful spots and streaks and severe faced dragons covered with thorns, were having a brush with people who came as spectators.

[There are amazing amount of people and dragons, huh.]

“Yes, no matter what people say, this tournament is one of the most prosperous competition of the Union Kingdom.”

Tirnanog was carrying my bags, disguising as a steel golem as usual.

However, when we arrived at the venue we planned to take another action.

I still couldn't predict at what timing Auguste would get in touch with the contract beast.

Perhaps it might be just after this tournament.

“Tir, as I thought... in case of emergency, please do it.”

[Leave it to me. If I do it seriously, there is nobody who can run away from me.]

Auguste was not going to participate, but other problems might occur.

Therefore, instead of me who couldn't easily go out from the audience seating, Tirnanog who was inconspicuous and fast would track the beast.

By the way, when I was with my father, I asked him to be quiet.

The audience and the dragon knights were not the only ones touching the dragons. People with doctorate degree dispatched from Leandez Magic Academy were doing an investigation of the dragons quietly here. The students were wearing a mark of crested ibis, so I could recognize them at a glance.

“Honorable Duke of Aurelia. It has been a long time!”

“Ah, Elric-kun.”

That voice came from a clumsy glasses-wearing man who was scheduled to appear in the magic academy six years later as a teacher, Elric Actorius.

(Wow~..., I able to confirm the face of the fourth capture target!... Is this lucky?)

Perhaps they were already familiar with each other, Elric started talking with my father.

Elric was Eduart-oniisama's best friend from the same year.

He was still a student, but he seemed to have come along as a professor's assistant.

He had ruffled gray hair, troubled eyebrows, and gray eyes.

He looked like an honest, gentle young man.

His smiling face that had a feeling of bashful and awkwardness was impressive, and if I looked closely, he was a beauty that wouldn't lose even if he was standing in line with my older brother.

If I said it in a good way, he looked like an academic student, but if I said it in a bad way, he looked like an otaku with his casual and sloppy clothing.

However, only special scholars from the magic academy were allowed to wear the King's Scholar mark.

His slightly refined movements and smart atmosphere were shown through, was it because of his hidden origin?

But, as soon as he appeared his glasses were already askew.
I squirmed a bit, I wanted to fix it.

By the way, he disguised himself as a commoner, but he was supposedly born in nobility.

Yes, it was the information that was on the character introduction.

If I had played his individual scenario, I would have understood more about his detailed circumstances.

It was very regrettable.

It was completely unknown why a flashy person like Eduart-oniisama was good friends with the pure Elric.

Did they have a common hobby?

Ah, speaking of which, Elric was majored in magical beast research, so he might be getting along well with my older brother who was investigating Zaratan.

Elric's line of sight was directed this way.

When he noticed, my father introduced me.

“Oops, are you meeting for the first time? This is my daughter Erica.”

“Pleased to meet you, Elric-sama.”

I gave a light greeting while pinching the skirt.

I put on an innocent smile on my face as much as possible.

“Ah no, please stop with the formalities, Erica-sama. Because I am just a lowly commoner student.”

Elric dyed his cheeks shyly and tried to correct the skewed glasses with a trembling hand.

Such an ordinary person, he already felt familiar and it was fresh in this world.

“Then, how about Actorius-sensei?”

“No, no, I’m still a research student, no way!”

“I heard from Eduart, but it seems that he is publishing papers one after another at a young age.”

“Well, how amazing.”

He was truly an unmatched talented and earnest young man, huh.

“N-no, I’m not that great... Even the research is something that is going well thanks to Eduart.”

He became flustered.

My father also seemed to enjoy teasing about the future prospects of the young man.

Beside indulging himself in alchemy and ruins investigation, it seemed Eduart-
oniisama was also striving in other academic pursuits.

“Elric-kun, are you going to help out in the tournament today?”

“Y-yes. I am checking the dragons in today’s tournament. It is because of the rampant cheating, such as doping with magical potions or using dangerous equipment.”

It was surprising that this country’s dragon knights would do such a thing.

Did that mean the participants were serious?

“Ah! By the way, did Eduart not come along today?”

“Aah, my son is a bit... there is a business that he has to take care of.”

My father looked around before saying so.

Oh, he was in a secret duty at the direct order of the Ignitia royal family.

From his reaction, Otoou-sama seemed to know the content.

“Perhaps, it is an investigation of the grave robbery case? Since the previous incident of Leandez, recently there are too many similar cases.”

“No, I cannot tell you the details right now, but it’s another matter.”

“I see... I understand.”

Previous incident of Leandez.

Was that the story of the night when we went to the Ruins of Visitor?

Because there was an emergency situation, my older brother went to the magic academy hurriedly.

If the grave robbery incident had happened at that time, I could understand the reason he went in a hurry.

My father and Actorius-sensei stared at me who was straining my ears to listen.

Immediately, I tried smiling as if I didn’t know anything.

“Hm. We should end this conversation.”

“T-that’s right!”

Obviously, I had the face of ‘I heard something unpleasant.’

No, no, I didn’t understand what you were talking about, so it was alright to leak more information, you know?

“Elric-kun. Then, let’s talk another time.”

“Yes, Your Honor. Thank you for your continued support.”

After saying goodbye to Actorius-sensei, my father and I headed towards the tournament venue.

The seats for noble guests, Ignitia royal family and the three former kingdoms, had been prepared.

In other words, it was including the King, Queen Consort, and Auguste.

Duchess of Harvan and Ann.

The empty seat for Duke of Lucanrant.

And then, my father the Duke of Aurelia and I.

Would Auguste sit properly at the seats for noble guests?

I was a little worried.

No way, he wouldn't ride on a dragon without telling me... would he?

While becoming a little anxious, I came through the gate of the venue.

✧✧✧

The venue for the jousting tournament was decorated with the image symbols that represented each former kingdom.

Ignitia of the South was a red flame and a golden dragon.

Lucanrant of the North was a white snow flower and a silver wolf.

Harvan of the East was a silver moon and a black forest.

Aurelia of the west was a golden star and aquamarine sea.

However, we were heading for the seats with red and gold, not the gold and aquamarine ones.

The noble guests' seat for Ignitia was made slightly higher than the others.

“H-huh? Where is Prince Auguste?”

That was the first thing that came out of my mouth.

Without greeting first, I said such a thing.

Ah, this was bad.

The King Ignitia and his wife were surprised to see this.

“Auguste, huh... that child said he was not feeling well and went back to his room. In the past he was looking forward seeing the tournament... it couldn’t be helped.”

“Erica-sama, thank you for caring about our son. If he knew that you were worried, he surely will be delighted.”

Somehow, the eyes of the Ignitia couple that were looking at me were very kind.

But I didn’t come up here to raise their good will towards me, I came to strike my death flags.

“I am sorry for the disturbance. I said something rude to the prince at the banquet, so I want to apologize in person... unfortunately, it seems that I have to do it in another occasion. Thank you for inviting me to the tournament today.”

I lowered my head and backed down so as to be hidden behind my father’s shadow.

I was too impatient.

Alright. The wound was shallow. Probably shallow.

I didn’t think the accumulated mistakes would be a laughing matter, but that was alright.

Anyway, I wondered if Auguste really was in his room.

It seemed to be progressing like the original work, I was worried.

I wanted to get out and check his condition, but I wondered if that would also be difficult.

I made an eye contact with Tirnanog at my feet, but for now I decided to wait at the noble guests’ seat.

It would be bad if I moved too early and couldn’t respond to unforeseen circumstances.

When I thought about such a thing, King Ignitia and Otou-sama started talking cheerfully.

“Blackcurrant will also participate this year, Your Majesty.”

“Let’s see. Ooh, you’re right! Ernst’s eyes are as enviable as ever. What kind of rider is he?”

“His face is covered with a helmet, a black armor, and no crest... there is a blue ribbon on his left arm.”

“A mysterious black knight whose identity is unknown! Moreover, he seems to have an oath with a lady. I remember that. I used to hide my face and participate when I was young. About Auguste, it is regretful that he couldn’t participate because of the age restrictions.”

King Ignitia looked at the youthful dragon knight with a joyful expression.

He really liked dragons.

Huh, but, he said somewhat disturbing words.

Unknown black knight? A blue ribbon?

Somehow, the dialog of King Ignitia about *‘I used to hide my face and participate when I was young’* caught my attention.

No way, right?

“Otou-sama, which one is Blackcurrant?”

“That big black dragon, Erica. She is a general purpose dragon of 20-meter class.”

“This tournament is also a way of picking up competent knight candidates hidden in the city, Erica-ojousan. However, when it comes to the 20-meter class, it is hard to find a rider for them. I guess this is the first time in five years that she flies with a rider on her.”

When I asked for an explanation, an unexpectedly detailed information came back.

King Ignitia seemed to be especially excited.

When people talked about his favorite subject, it unintentionally resulted in rapid-talking, they resembled each other in this way.

“I wonder if that black knight belongs to the Order, but he is an excellent rider, huh.”

“Blackcurrant has a docile nature, but she is a 20-meter class. It is wonderful just being able to get on her. Certainly, that is a person I’d love to be in our Order.”

“I see.”

Anyway, my suspicion had grown more and more as I heard the explanation.

Was that Auguste riding on Blackcurrant the Black Dragon?

Oh, I hoped it was an unrelated unknown genius.

Even if it was Auguste, I hoped that something wouldn’t go wrong.

Outside my prayers, the horn marking the opening of the tournament resounded loudly.

Chapter 31

Jousting Tournament (2)

The jousting tournament was divided into three classes.

A 5-meters class, that was a dragon whose body length was 3 meters – including the tail – with wing length 5 meters.

A dragon with a wing length 10 meters and a total body length of 6 meters was called a 10-meters class.

A dragon with a wing length of 20 meters and a total body length of 12 meters was called a 20-meters class.

Excluding the tail, the 5-meters class was about the size of a pony, the 10-meters class was a little bigger than a horse.

The 20-meters class was... about the size of a small airplane?

If it was that big, I couldn't see the people on board when I looked from afar.

Right now the 5-meters class and 10-meters class matches were finishing smoothly.

The rider of the 10-meters class winner, the knight who was on the bronze dragon, was proudly holding his left arm facing the audience seating with the cheers of the audience and the flowers thrown in.

Several ribbons were wrapped around his left hand's armor.

This knight also pledged his dedication to several ladies.

A lot of flowers were thrown to the bronze dragon leaving the arena.

Several flower wreaths were caught around the horns or the thorns.

During the Advent Festival, the winning knight was praised as a hero, and the dragon was adorned with more flowers and loves from the people.

We at the noble guests' seats also threw in the prepared wreaths.

At that time, my eyes met with Ann's who was sitting on the opposite side across the people of the Ignitia royal family.

We waved at each other.

Well, after that, was Klaus alright?

Let's ask Ann later.

Straining my ears, the Queen Consort and the mother-daughter of Harvan who were dressing to show an elegant dress style of Ignitia, seemed to be excited with a girly topic about coming up with an idea on how to protect their skin from the southern sunrays.

On the contrary, over here was a lecture about dragons from the King who seemed to have becoming child-like.

I learned a lot, but where did Ann and I differ?

Next would be the match of 20-meters class.

Although I wasn't participating, somehow I was feeling nervous.

This was the first game of that Black Knight who might be Auguste.

A black knight on a black dragon, and a knight who rode on a brass dragon who was his opponent, went down to the arena.

Just because the dragons were flapping their wings, my vertical roll, which was quite far away from them, was fluttering in the wind.

I felt the strong wind that seemed to be blown off by a dragon flying around nearby.

It felt like a typhoon when the 20-meters class did it.

Around the audience seat, Protective Circle that the mages had set up, and the Wand of Protective Shield that the alchemists had prepared were on standby.

It was prepared for an emergency accident, but I was a bit worried whether the dragons that would come in could really be stopped.

When the match started, both Otou-sama and His Majesty the King were using a wand.

His Majesty the King also wore alchemists' leather gloves properly to prevent the reaction.

It looked like the wand they were using was Raptor Sight.

The top of the wand was a hawk's eye stone, the material for the shaft was a type of maple called a clairvoyant tree.

On its surface woven-bamboo pattern were carved, and at the bottom of the shaft a sculpture of a hawk's head was added.

For the core materials, ten types of bones of birds of prey were used.

The effect of this wand, which could be made relatively cheap, was to enhance our eyesight.

It could be said that it was a perfect wand for watching this match.

"Hou, that blue ribbon, it seems that golden threads are slightly embroidered into it. Guessing from the matching colors, is that guy's lady from Aurelia? Hmm, that black knight is quite small. It is regrettable that his face cannot be seen... it's concerning..."

"Your Majesty, please moderate your unjust suspicion."

The King who had reinforced his eyes muttered while observing the Black Knight carefully.

My heart felt like it was going to leap out of my ribcage.

It became more and more resembling the ribbon I gave to Auguste.

"Oh, if you don't mind Erica-ojousan, then you should use this wand. The price of this wand will be my treat."

"Would that be alright?"

"Your Majesty, if my daughter is spoiled too much..."

"Isn't it fine? Because she is interested in the dragons. I'm just glad that children like the tournament."

The King gave his wand while smiling.

While I felt somewhat guilty, I still took the wand.

If this was the case, let's use it to find out whether that black knight is Auguste or not, since that was the point.

“Pardon me, Your Majesty. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but may I swing this wand twice?”

“Erica, that—”

“It's fine, it's fine. You can use it continuously.”

Apologizing to Oto-sama internally, I accepted the offer.

After equipping the alchemist's silk gloves my older brother gave me as a present last time, I swung the Raptor Sight twice.

Although my vision was enhanced sufficiently for watching just by swinging it once, if I swung it twice I gained visual capability that exceeded that.

As soon as the effect was applied, I focused my eyes on the ribbon which the Black Knight put around his arm.

(Wow! That's my ribbon...!!)

The magically enhanced visual acuity enlarged the ribbon wrapped around the Black Knight's arm like a camera's zoom function.

There was an embroidery with golden thread on the blue fabric.

The design also matched and there was no mistake because it was a hand-sewn embroidery.

That means the Black Knight who hid his identity was confirmed to be Auguste.

What should I do?

The situations were developing steadily towards my death flag.

If this was the case, there was nothing that I could do except to pray that Auguste wouldn't fall, and thought about words that could be a good follow-up that wouldn't

seem to be insulting if he fell.

The horn that marked the start of the match rang.

The dragon knights, who were facing each other, held a long spear before them and bowed.

This dragons jousting tournament competed for superiority by having three matches on a one-on-one basis.

The first one was with a spear, then with an axe or hammer, finally a match with a sword.

Of course, it was not enough for the dragon knights to just go all out, they needed to win according to the game-specific rules.

Shields were attached on three points: the left shoulder of the rider, the left chest of the dragon, and the left rear of the saddle.

If they hit their weapon on one of those shields, they would earn one win.

If they fell from the saddle or dropped their weapon, it would be their opponent's win.

The first one to score two wins or made their opponent faints would advance to the next round.

After bowing, they gripped the long spear with their whole right arm as if embracing it, and took a charging stance.

The two dragons of black and brass blowed up cloud of dust as they leaped, caught the wind with their huge wings and rose sharply.

“It seems that it has started.”

“Hou. This is... just by looking at his movements above ground, I think that he's not an ordinary person.”

“What do you mean? Your Majesty?”

I asked the King who was brimming with atmosphere that he wanted to explain it no matter what.

“Yeah. Erica-jousan. Dragon is a creature that is easy to reflect the mental state of their rider. Especially when it comes to fighting.”

“Yes.”

“Look at that, the shakiness of the neck of the black dragon is smaller than the brass dragon, right? That Blackcurrant is a dragon with calm temperament, but it is rare that she trusts such first-time rider so much.”

“Is that so...”

Auguste, somehow you were immensely praised by your father.

Or rather, I was wondering how did his riding ability became better this quickly.

No way, had he already fused with the contract beast?

While I was feeling anxious, the match was entering the climax.

The dragons entangled themselves together, crossing several times in the air like a tornado.

Just by chasing the shades of black and brass that changed places quickly, I became dizzy.

Soon, both of them abruptly took a distance from each other.

Both riders threw away their spear, pulled out the second weapon that was attached to the saddle, and took the stance for either axe or hammer and bowed.

A shield that broke into two was falling, I didn't know whose was it.

Which one of them won?

“I do not think that he is a young boy, he is quite skilled with spear, Your Majesty.”

“Umu. That feint when they clashed their spears for the third time, it is not something that even the regular dragon knight is able to do. Perhaps he is a famous juvenile knight in the field of jousting.”

“It was admirable that the one that broke was the shield of the saddle.”

“That was very thrilling. I thought that the Black Knight was aiming for the dragon's chest. Instead he turned around and swooped down from that posture and struck the

rear."

Otou-sama and King Ignitia were talking delightfully about their first impressions. When I looked for the aforementioned saddle that turned up in the conversation, I realized that the shield behind the saddle of the brass dragon was gone. That means, it was Auguste who took the first win.

"Erica-ojousan. You may wish to take a momentary break and look over the match area as a whole. If you stared too closely, it will be rather difficult to catch the battle flow."

"Thank you very much, Your Majesty."

The King who seemed to have read my complexion whispered into my ear. Although the second match was about to start, I consciously tried to calm my mind and spread my horizons a little. Certainly, this time it might be easier to see their movements than the first match.

Blackcurrant that Auguste rode on, sometimes as daring as an eagle, sometimes as graceful as a swallow, nimbly flew over the opponent's dragon despite her large build, barely grazing it in passing.

She was moving in a way that made me nervous.

As if Auguste integrated his whole body into the dragon and became her third front leg, he breathed in sync with her and aimed at the opponent's rider.

Every time the heavy mace clashed with the big axe, the brass dragon's rider's balance would be thrown off.

However, Auguste was stable as if the saddle and his lower body were stuck together.

"It is a bold, aggressive turn from the first match, Your Majesty. He didn't frighten his dragon, there are not many riders who even come close to have that kind of capability."

"Is that so, Your Majesty?"

"Umu. That's because the mental state of the rider is transmitted directly to the dragon. Nothing is more gallant than letting the dragon to feel a sense of absolute security, not to mention his technique to avoid clashing at the very last moment... Oh!"

Look at that, Erica-ojousan! Now he performs a backward somersault that seems to twine around his opponent!"

King Ignitia kept watching the battle flow with raising exultation like a child.

It seemed that he was fascinated by the battle of the Black Knight Auguste.

It was not unreasonable.

There was an indescribable beauty about his fight.

Even I who was without knowledge, thought that his way of fighting was cool.

Couldn't bear the fierce attack, the opponent knight finally dropped his axe.

The match was over.

The cheers from the audience praised the Black Knight who was actually Auguste in disguise.

The knight of the brass dragon took off his helmet and raised one hand in surrender.

Auguste made an inverted flight with his dragon and touched the opponent knight's hand.

That touch was also done by acrobatics flight that almost grazed his opponent.

The brass dragon's knight, after a moment of shock, fainted with the Black Knight waving his hand while giving a broad smile behind him.

Instead of showing his face, the Black Knight was showing off by standing up on the saddle of the dragon that should be unstable and bowed to the audience.

The audience seats were cheering for the Black Knight again.

King Ignitia unexpectedly stood up and applauded.

Even though it was still the first game, there was a tremendous excitement.

"That's brilliant! That black knight will definitely be scouted into our Order! It's regrettable. It's truly regrettable... I want to show this match to Auguste! He will definitely like this Black Knight!"

Without knowing that it was his son, the King praised the Black Knight.

The combination of Black Knight Auguste and Black Dragon Blackcurrant kept on winning smoothly.

Moreover, every match was a straight two wins.

Auguste advanced to the final match.

On the opposite side was a dragon knight wearing silvery white armor, Louis Ode-Ignitia with the White Dragon Camellia.

I felt that a fateful confrontation was going to start.

Chapter 32

Jousting Tournament (3)

After the semifinals finished, the game arenas that were roughed up by the intense battles were tidied up.

A levelling tool similar to a tremendously large rake was pulled by a dragon as large as a number of cows together.

It seemed to be a difficult job just to level out a vast match arena.

The final would be a match between Auguste who disguised himself as the unknown Black Knight who rode on the Black Dragon Blackcurrant against Louis Ode-Ignitia who rode on the White Dragon Camellia.

Not only Auguste, Louis was also in the final for the whole match.

Louis' ride, the White Dragon Camellia, seemed to have more speed and power than other dragons.

Although there were little differences in the riders' competence, there was a big gap due to the performance difference of their dragons.

On top of that, Louis liked to play rough.

It was forbidden to use dragons' fangs, claws, and breaths, but he had launched attacks in all other ways.

Due to the fact that his dragon had more strength, even if his spear didn't hit, it would cause his opponent's stance to collapse as it was.

He would keep a position where he could hold his opponent's head by taking advantage of his dragon's speed, and made his opponent hit the ground.

He would let Camellia made a roar as they passed their opponent, and made their opponent lost their composure.

Blowed up sand to blind their opponent's eyes, or made smokescreen.

Etc.

The King said that Louis' rough way of fighting was because he was from Karkinos. Dragon knights from the Ignitia's territory in Karkinos, whether they were young or veterans, seemed to be rich in battle experience without exception. Their way of fighting involved a riding technique assuming the opponent was a giant, the King said.

"As a knight it's not something to be praised about, but it is another thing if you think of it as a soldier. That rough play would be a good stimulus for young dragon knights who only had few battle experiences."

"I see. But Your Majesty is another good stimulus... it seems that you like Blackcurrant's unknown Black Knight rider better?"

"Fufufu. It can't be helped, you know? I am just a person. My thoughts as a King and my personal preference are different."

King Ignitia winked with a look like a mischievous child.

When I saw that, I remembered Auguste when he was the self-proclaimed Angel-san. The King and Auguste's gestures resembled each other at that moment.

While the King and Otou-sama were happily talking how 'That was a great game', 'That dragon knight is good', someone came up to the noble guests' seats.

The one who appeared diving under the banner in which the emblem of Ignitia was woven was Actorius-sensei who had the badge of management staff attached on him.

Huh? Were your glasses already askew, Sensei?

"Your Majesty the King, Honorable Duke, pardon me for disturbing you during a meeting."

"Oh, Elric-kun. What is it?"

"There has been a report from the observation team saying that there are foul plays performed by means of magic."

Otou-sama easily introduced Actorius-sensei to the King.

Actorius-sensei took out a parchment on which the stamp of management staff was printed from his bosom and showed it to them.

Otou-sama looked onto the parchment.

“Hmm, Blackcurrant... that Black Knight, huh.”

“That’s right, Your Majesty. Because of the incident in Harvan’s territory, strong mages were dispatched all over the place, although only a few traces of cleverly hidden concealment magic were perceived...”

I heard a somewhat disturbing conversation.

Auguste was cheating?

I had never heard of such story, and he didn’t seem to be a person who likes to cheat.

Even if he did ride on the dragon behind my back, since the suspicions about Auguste’s blood hadn’t been cleared, there was no meaning in cheating.

Either way, this was the person who took a dynamic approach of fusing with a contract beast by putting his life on the line.

Was it a conspiracy?

Or, was history becoming distorted because I took different actions from the original?

While thinking about such a thing, a big cheer rose from the audience.

When I saw the arena, two dragons were flying away.

King Ignitia who saw that straightened his back and shouted unexpectedly.

“What! Why has the game started while it is still under discussion!?”

“Ah, oh no! I’m very sorry, Your Majesty the King. I forgot to contact other departments to put in a break!”

Uwah, Actorius-sensei was already a clumsy person at this time, huh.

Actorius-sensei made a commotion in his panic, trying to fix his glasses’ placement many times.

However, the pair of glasses shifted in a strange direction each time.

What's with that, were those eyeglasses cursed?

Otou-sama stopped Actorius-sensei who was finally trying to break into a run somewhere.

"Elric-kun, calm down. Anyway, let's check the facts first."

"Aah, once the tournament has started, it cannot be interrupted at a moment's notice. Even if it is the command of the King."

Otou-sama nodded in the words of the King and took out a single wand.

Made of sugar maple, with a squared emerald stuck to the head of the wand – it was the Wand of Glam Sight.

It was somewhat longer than the wand of Eduart-oniisama, and it was specially made in which the peacock feather workmanship and the surface of the emerald were inlaid with gold.

Otou-sama was called with the epithet Long-Armed Ernst.

Otou-sama's role in the naval battle of Aurelia was a super long-range bombardment that buried the giants over the horizon with a blow.

Therefore, it seemed that Otou-sama's wands had been subjected to range extension.

Looking at Black Dragon Blackcurrant who was already dancing far above in the sky, Otou-sama shook his wand.

After the same magic circle like the ordinary Glam Sight appeared, multiple magic circles overlapped in a binocular shape.

"Hm... so the source of the magical effect is the stirrup, huh. I see. There is a concealment magic layered over and over. It is no wonder that he passed through the exam before the match if this is the case."

I was in shock.

I wondered if Auguste really did something wrong.

There had to be a misunderstanding.

“But, it is harmless... no, although it cannot be said to be harmless, at the very least it isn’t strengthening the dragon illegally.”

“Otou-sama, that, what magic is it?”

“It is Intoxication.”

“Intoxication?”

Magic of Intoxication?

Why was there such a thing on Auguste’s dragon?

While I was worried, the King gave a broad smile.

“Hahaha. Magic of Intoxication? Certainly, if people could be strengthened with such a thing, the bar would be overflowing with mighty men. Rather, he used Intoxication on his dragon, but he still can manipulate his dragon splendidly over there.”

As the King said, he was right.

Drunk dragons seemed dangerous to approach.

To the words of the King, Otou-sama shrugged his shoulders.

“However, this is awkward, Your Majesty. Although it is only a magic of Intoxication, there is no doubt that it will be in violation of the prohibition of use.”

“As long as he loses, we can handle this internally as our secret... but that Black Knight, he is not likely to lose that easily.”

After thinking for a while, King Ignitia slowly nodded whether he came to a conclusion internally.

“Yosh. Let’s continue it. Look at the audience’s faces. It would be a riot if we interrupt this match. Unfortunately, even if the Black Knight won, it cannot be treated like a win.”

“In the first place, Your Majesty wants to see this match, right?”

“Fufu. You caught me.”

To Otou-sama’s statement, the King stuck out his tongue.

However, he soon put on a serious look and instructed Elric.

“Anyway, Elric. That magic is an Intoxication magic and does not strengthen dragons and the riders... so, I would like you to notify other staff members.”

“Understood, Your Majesty the King.”

Elric bowed out, left the noble guests’ seats and went down the stairs in a hurry.

I was a little worried whether he would fall.

But, I was more worried about—

Unexpectedly, the audience stood awkwardly.

Otou-sama, the King, and I restlessly returned our eyes to the two dragons.

Somehow, it seemed that Auguste was overwhelmed by his opponent.

The King and Otou-sama immediately analysed the situation of the match.

“Hm? Just now, was that a hit?”

“No, Your Majesty, that was a feint. Simultaneously with the attack on the Black Knight, Louis hit his own shield. It seems that you mistook it as a hit by that sound.”

Attentive to the sound of Louis’ shield, Auguste took his gaze off from Louis’ spear for a moment and confirmed his own shield.

Without missing that chance, Louis tried to knock down Blackcurrant by Camellia’s body slam.

Even though I thought that it would hit her for sure, Blackcurrant avoided that body slam by a hair’s breadth.

Although Auguste was good at fighting, his pace was broken by Louis' rough play attacks.

(Wow, dangerous... , nevertheless, even though he didn't see the other party, Auguste avoided that well, huh.)

Ignitia's dragon knights could see their surroundings by the dragon's line of sight.

A few matches before, King Ignitia taught me such a thing.

Whenever they rode on a dragon, they would be able to grasp their surroundings that they shouldn't be able to see through the eyes of their dragon.

The more adept they were at riding, the clearer their field of vision through the eyes of their dragon, and the duration for borrowing their dragon's eyes became longer.

(So, in fact, Auguste who rides on a dragon for the first time is supposed to not be able to see behind him that much... it's strange.)

The two of them took a distance and turned, once again took a charging stance.

Just as in the several spear matches before, Camellia was rising to a high and far away position.

The difference in speed and power of the two dragons appeared clearly.

According to the explanation of Oto-sama and the King, basically it was advantageous in the battle between the spears for the one whose dragon could fly farther and higher.

It was because there was more room to accelerate more in the immediate following attack.

“After all, Blackcurrant is in disadvantage at the spear match.”

“Umu. Until now, because the dragons were equal in terms of physical abilities, that Black Knight overwhelmed his opponents by his riding technique alone... it is natural that Camellia becomes a difficult opponent for him.”

Why were two dragons of the same 20-meters class could have such a big difference?

While watching the matches, I heard this from the King and Oto-sama.

The answer seemed to be because one of them was bred by a wealthier aristocrat.

King Ignitia arranged things so that every noble could have rich environment to breed their dragons.

Each of them had their own private stables and hunting ground.

Food contained abundant nutrition and keepers who managed their balanced nutrition.

A proper training menu.

Many staffs gathered just to manage a single dragon, including a specialized dragon doctor who managed not only their physical health but also mental health.

“Although the strength of Camellia is unnatural to be only from the matter of rearing environment differences... , well, even if Ode-Ignitia family hides one or two techniques to raise a strong dragon, it is not strange.”

The King said that while tilting his head.

Anyway, I found out that Auguste's Blackcurrant was in disadvantage.

I wondered if the dragon eggs he was raising had hatched, for him to be able to confront a dragon equivalent to Camellia.

Auguste continued avoiding while riding a dragon that was inferior in performance.

However, overwhelmed by the speed and power of Camellia, Auguste seemed to have no time to attack.

After tens or so attacks, Blackcurrant's balance was eventually thrown off.

Louis didn't miss that opportunity.

In order not to give Blackcurrant time to recover, Louis charged with the smallest turning radius.

Making a sharp descend with Camellia, Louis aimed at the shield on the left rear of the saddle from the back of Auguste.

(Dangerous!)

Just before Louis' spear hit, Auguste made Blackcurrant do a somersault at the perfect timing.

From Auguste's position, he shouldn't be able to see the exact position of Louis.

Nevertheless, he used the dragon's field of view again to avoid that attack.

Louis' spearhead stabbed the empty air.

While Auguste was upside down, he stabbed his spear aiming for Louis who made a mistake, but he didn't hit the shield.

Immediately after the two of them passed each other, something unexpected happened.

Louis was gone from Camellia's saddle.

(Ah, that's wrong! He wasn't gone!)

When I moved my gaze towards Auguste, something was stuck to his spear and struggling.

It was Louis who was hanging suspended with a strap of his armor entangled.

(Eeh—? But Louis has a big body, so how did that happen!?)

If I looked closely, the spearhead was fixed to the metal fixtures attached to the saddle. That should have been the metal fixtures to attach the spear while riding.

Certainly this would give all the weight to the dragon, so he didn't need power to lift him.

Instead, the timing to entangle the armor strap and fix it to the opposite side was supposed to be quite difficult.

If he failed, Louis would be wary of it and he wouldn't be able to try it again, and I was impressed by that bold move.

“He pulled it off using the momentum when the dragon turned direction, huh.”

“Hou... that was very clever...”

Otou-sama was convinced by the King's commentary, he sighed in admiration reflexively.

Even the audience didn't understand what happened just by looking at it.

The venue fell silent.

However, when Auguste held Louis out towards Camellia's forelimbs, the audience broke into cheers.

If the opponent's body was completely separated from their saddle, it was counted as one win like an attack on the shield.

Despite being said to be at disadvantage, Auguste, who rode on Blackcurrant, won the first match.

Chapter 33

Jousting Tournament (4)

Camellia put Louis on her back.

Louis raised his helmet and was shouting something with an angry expression, but I couldn't hear the content.

Auguste who was dressed in black armor was preparing for the next match and it seemed that he didn't view Louis as his opponent.

Next was the match of heavyweight weapons.

According to the setup, they supposed to return to their starting position, threw away their spear, pulled out the heavyweight weapons such as mace and flail, and bowed to each other.

The match was supposed to start after that.

Louis didn't try to return to his starting position, instead as soon as he removed his own axe from the saddle, he struck the Black Knight who turned his back.

However, as if Auguste knew about it, he turned the body of his dragon around suddenly and knocked down the axe.

He threw away his spear at the same time and pulled out his mace, but he didn't immediately move to attack.

When Auguste took a bowing posture while performing an acrobatic flight, the booing of the audience toward Louis turned into cheers for the Black Knight all at once.

“As expected, that Black Knight is similar to a flower that attracts people's attention. It is a shame that he cannot be announced as victorious even if he won this match.”

“Since it is the magic of Intoxication rather than illegal enhancement, isn't it likely that the audience will forgive his circumstances?”

“Even if the audience and I are fine with it, those noisy elders wouldn't tolerate it. Good

grief. I didn't think the day would come when dictatorship became attractive."

King Ignitia shrugged his shoulders jokingly.

I knew that feeling.

Whether Auguste wins or loses in this match, I wanted to give him a lei in honor of his good fight.

At the moment, only I knew the identity of that Black Knight.

The flow of this match was leaning favorably to Louis again.

Camellia always flew as if anticipating Blackcurrant, she kept making a descent that obstructs her path.

Every time Blackcurrant tried to rise she would be held down, and if she tried to go down, she would be kicked further away.

Like that, at last Blackcurrant was staggering as she landed.

In fact, Auguste couldn't avoid Louis' attack, he was forced to ward off his attacks with his mace.

It was an overwhelmingly disadvantageous situation against Louis and Camellia who were still in the air.

But still, Auguste was defending tenaciously.

Louis who lost his temper, was starting his rough play once again.

He attacked the ground with Camellia's tail and began to make cloud of dust.

"Hm, a smokescreen, huh."

"So he's going to do it again, that Louis."

Otou-sama and the King seemed to be able to read the next move.

I recalled the previous match that Louis was in.

At that time, Louis dropped his opponent to the ground, set up dirt and smoke, then

aimed at the helmet of the rider.

The rider who had lost his helmet to protect his face and was deprived of his sight by dust couldn't avoid the following attack, and Louis would break his shield without mercy.

Louis repeated those attacks that could almost be said to be unfair three times before the semi-finals.

(Aah! If his helmet was taken off, not only he's in danger of being blindsided, his identity will also be revealed!)

Auguste also knew that.

However, Auguste couldn't do anything about it.

If he could fly again before his helmet was stolen, he might be able to do something.

But before that could happen, the tail of Camellia who moved unexpectedly hit Auguste's helmet.

A partially crushed figure of a black helmet rolled to the ground.

Long blonde hair that was contained in the helmet was gently blown in the wind.

White skin like an alabaster statue.

A pretty boy who looked like a girl, who was disproportionate with the boorish black armor, appeared from underneath the helmet.

When Auguste, who had been dressed as a black knight, revealed his identity, Louis stopped attacking.

Louis lifted his lips sadistically and said something towards Auguste.

Auguste clenched his teeth and endured the words of Louis who probably would have been a verbal abuse.

The audience seemed to be unable to decide their reaction regarding the identity of the Black Knight.

Did they think Auguste was an excellent dragon knight different from the rumors, or did they think that the actions of the Black Knight were all deception?

I couldn't predict which way people's thoughts would fall over.

"No way, that is... Auguste? That Black Knight is my son?"

"Yes, there is no mistake. Dear... that is our Auguste."

The Queen who had kept her silence and quietly smiled beside the King, clearly asserted.

She held the hand of King Ignitia with a trembling hand.

"Ooh... that Auguste... finally, he can ride... moreover, with such gallant, dancing in the sky brilliantly..."

"Of course. That child is the son of you and me... he is a legitimate successor of King Ignitia."

"I have always believed in you. Of course I believe you. However, to actually see the proof, I didn't think that my heart would tremble like this."

"Yes... I feel the same."

"But, God, what a cruel thing you are... to my child who is to be praised for this kind of rare capability, I must announce his rule violation and his defeat..."

While talking, King Ignitia hung his head.

"If that child didn't fly in this sacred tournament venue... , or if the dragon that is with that child was not Blackcurrant with the magical stirrup..."

The Queen put a handkerchief on the cheek of the King and wiped away the tear that would have flowed there.

But, some tears were running down on the cheeks of the Queen.

That was good.

Auguste's parents believed that he was riding a dragon with his own ability.

Surely, that would be more valuable to Auguste than if he was believed by anyone else.

But those who were familiar with Auguste, which was far from the true Auguste and believed the scandals, chose the opposite response.

The crowd talked about Auguste from one's mouth to others, casting a gaze of contempt at him.

Louis raised the axe that he was holding as if he was boosted by the audience's voice. Turning around, the audience seemed to overflow with cheers calling for Louis.

Louis laughed and with a grin, he ordered Camellia to close in on Auguste.

At the same time as she was approaching, Camellia's tail swept the ground and bombarded Auguste and Blackcurrant with sands.

The pair of a person and a dragon closed their eyes and diverted their faces.

Without missing that chance, Louis swung the axe that he had.

Auguste who couldn't avoid the attack, received the attack bodily.

The shield that was hung on the chest of the dragon was destroyed with a blow from Louis' axe and rolled to the ground of the match arena.

At the same time, it was the last fight of the tournament finale – the beginning of the match of swords.

Chapter 34

Jousting Tournament (5)

Just like in the heavyweight weapons match, in this swords match Louis also commenced an attack without warning.

Louis immediately threw away his axe and pulled out a sword before Auguste was in his position.

Blackcurrant was retreating while keeping her eyes open to protect her rider, but Auguste still kept his eyes closed and was depressed.

Louis often aimed while Camellia was doing a feint, trying to strike the shield attached on the shoulder of Auguste.

Blackcurrant avoided the sword attacks that might hit Auguste.

Blackcurrant succeeded in avoiding the first blow swung in their direction.

But Louis continued to attack mercilessly.

Blackcurrant's balance was thrown off due to Camellia's ramming attacks, and Louis swung his sword aiming the moment when her feet stopped.

The swords of Auguste and Louis clashed and made sparks.

It seemed that he drew his sword during that close call.

(Uwah, dangerous!)

Louis' sword attack was a serious blow that couldn't be seen by untrained eyes.

He was 4 years or so older, plus he had the advantage of height and was attacking without mercy.

Of course, because it was a sword for the competition, the edge was dulled, but if he

failed to parry it, even if there was a shield or armor, it seemed that it could break his bones.

“He warded it off...? No way, even if he could do it during the heavyweight weapons match, but swords?”

Otou-sama groaned while looking at the imminent battle.

Was there something wrong with that?

When I tilted my head, the King responded to Otou-sama’s muttering.

“That’s right. Normally it’s impossible except by chance. Even if it was a 10-meters class dragon, it’s rare that a knight with such high level skill appeared...”

“Ooh, he parried it again. I do not think this is a coincidence.”

“Otou-sama, Your Majesty, what are you talking about?”

When I inquired as I couldn’t understand it, the two of them nodded with a mysterious expression.

“That’s right, this was Erica’s first time watching the tournament. Moreover, there was almost no swords match done in this year’s competition.”

“Erica-ojousan, there is a fixed flow to a certain extent in the three matches in this tournament.”

His Majesty the King carefully explained it for me.

To summarize it, the battle flow was fixed in advance depending on the length of the weapon used.

And that fixation became more obvious as the size of the dragon increased.

Of the three kinds of weapons, it was said that usually the mid-air fighting was only done in the spears match.

Shorter weapons would make it more difficult to hit the target while flying at high speed.

Dragon knights used special long-handled hammers and axes, so it was barely possible to fight in the air during the match of heavyweight weapons.

Even then, the target was not the shields, but each other's weapon.

If the weapons were dropped their victory or defeat would be decided, so as if it was arranged beforehand, they would exchange blows with their weapon and it became a contest of endurance.

Of course, as Louis did in this final, sometimes there would be someone that used the tactic to push their opponent's dragon to the ground.

The dragon that fell to the ground would have their evasion ability considerably reduced.

Therefore, it was possible to aim the opponent's shield with relative ease even with a hammer or an axe.

The disadvantage of the dragon that was on the ground became even larger during the swords match.

Compared to the long-handled hammer, dragon knights' long swords were only about two thirds of that length.

That was the reason why it would make it harder to hit shields or each other's weapon.

For the dragon knight that was on the ground, attacks from the dragon knight that was in the air could come from all directions and receiving those attacks could be difficult, even if they were relying on their dragon's vision.

In addition, dragons of more than 10-meters class would need long runs to fly.

Of course, it was impossible to make a sufficient run for flying while fighting.

So when one of them fell to the ground, the courtesy to return to their original position was particularly important before the match resumed.

By the way, the flow of the swords match when it didn't become a one-sided match of air-to-earth was this.

Both of them would collectively land or match their altitude while hovering in the air, draw near at the last moment and cross swords with each other.

In this way, the match was easy to prolong.

The shield that could be targeted was limited to one place, which made it easier to defend.

It was harder to lose their grip of their weapon, since it was not heavy like in the heavyweight weapons match.

Since they couldn't use footwork, the ability difference due to their fencing skills was wonderful to see, etc.

Ultimately, the continuous contest of endurance and concentration in a drawn-out battle would decide the victory and defeat.

In this way, the original tournament was made to be a match where all aspect of strength was tested.

"In other words, it is a show of great skills that he could stop his opponent's blows many times over while he was on defense on the ground which should be disadvantageous for him."

"It's quite easy to understand, Erica-ojousan. That's right. It is hard to understand if you look from far away, but from the defending dragon knight – Auguste's point of view, it is very difficult to ward off the attacks. In the next moment, Louis might turn his back on him."

"Is it possible to turn this situation around?"

"Fufufu. Please watch my son's match with confidence. In the first place, Auguste likes watching this tournament. He should be aware of how to work on this situation."

Prompted by the King, I concentrated on the match.

At that time, it was the moment when the battle situation became a stalemate.

The moment when Camellia was trying to turn back and leave, Blackcurrant struck with her long tail.

She aimed at the base of Camellia's wings.

Camellia's balance was thrown off, she lost her momentum and landed on the ground.

With both of them on the ground, it was supposed to be a five-minutes match.

“Yosh, he did it! You remember it well, Auguste. That was the crucial move of the 10-meters class semi-final three years ago.”

The made a fist pump and raised his voice unexpectedly.

The King who once was lamenting at fate, now had his tension back at the show of Auguste's continuous success.

“Hm. His Highness Auguste prevails at the dragon techniques, but Louis is better in physique and actual battle experience. Since it's becoming difficult with the difference in ability of their dragons, this is exactly a fifty-fifty match.”

“My son will not lose in the contest of endurance. Different from how he looks, he is actually a hard worker.”

It sounded like a speech from a doting parent, but suddenly I was reminded of something.

He was lifting a heavy bag lightly during the sightseeing tour and there was a sense of stability when we were dancing.

It was easy to imagine that he might have tempered himself for the time when it was possible for him to ride a dragon.

Louis who had dropped to the ground turned completely and went into defense.

Letting Camellia took a distance, he also raised his sword and took the posture for defense.

But Auguste took an unexpected action.

Sand around Blackcurrant was winding, and for a moment I thought that Auguste also made a smokescreen.

However, his distance to Louis was too far for the sand to affect him.

“What, she is floating!?”

Otou-sama shouted and leaned his body forward.

Our attention drawn, the King and I watched over the sand.

Blackcurrant with Auguste on her back made her wings flapping strongly.

The 20-meters class dragon's body was lifted a few meters without running.

Simultaneously with the flapping, Blackcurrant seemed to breathe out as if spitting them out.

This was the identity of what looked like a smokescreen.

Louis noticed the anomaly and spurred Camellia to make an assault, but it was already too late.

The wings of Blackcurrant caught the wind and she was returning to the sky with Auguste.

A black dragon and a single black knight rose as they were.

“Your Majesty, what is that?”

“Hmm. I have heard of it from the folklore. In the era of the Third Giant War, in an anecdote of the Severe King Jean during the expedition to the Karkinos continent. The King's troops were cornered by the enemy and were in a crisis because they couldn't notice the siege of the giants due to the bad weather. However, Urien¹ who was the King's ride flew without running and saved them from that crisis.”

“Why is His Highness Auguste can do the same technique as the Severe King...?”

“I don't know. But, this strange thing has happened in a row. No matter what happens, it is peculiar.”

Speaking of which, Auguste was familiar with the guardian angel of the Founder King and the contract beast.

It was no wonder he was looking for the hint to ride on a dragon if he knew in detail about the folklore, he could also learn about the previous dragon knights and dragons from it.

Louis also made Camellia do a starting run and flew away.

It would be overwhelmingly worse if he flew towards a dragon that was already flying. But Auguste was already at a far higher height.

“What is His Highness planning to do? Although he flew away he didn’t try to adjust the altitude.”

“Is it a provocation or stalling for time—no, wait. No doubt, he’s planning to decide the match in an air battle.”

“No way. Why would he do that?”

“In this tournament, there is only one knight who has won in a high-speed air battle at swords match. The Blind Dragon Knight, the Earl of Caex at that time, Gustav.”

“Your Majesty, is that technique also possible for other dragon knights?”

“Although I tried to imitate the technique, the result was staggering. Even if it is possible to reproduce the technique, you need to do a lot of training... or, you need to be a telepathic genius that goes beyond Gustav who had a considerably high sensitivity due to his blindness.”

The whole audience fell silent and were watching Auguste.

While people were watching attentively, Auguste made Blackcurrant do a somersault with the sun behind him.

The appearance of a dragon and a person disappeared in the sunlight for an instant.

Blackcurrant folded her wings after flapping them for a while.

Blackcurrant shifted to a descent with Auguste on her back.

It was a sudden descent that reminded me of a kingfisher or a falcon.

Louis was stunned for a moment at the form of Blackcurrant who was approaching at a terrifying speed.

At this rate, it was a course where the two dragons would collide.

Before he could decide whether to avoid or intercept, Auguste had come closer.

Blackcurrant slipped through with a movement as if twining around Camellia who was escaping too late.

After a crossing which was literally only a hair's breadth away, Blackcurrant who was grazing the ground suddenly brakes and slowly hovered with her wings fluttering.

Without looking back at Louis who was left behind in the air, Auguste restored his sword to its sheath with an elegant movement.

Six pieces of woods fell while flapping in the wind.

The shields that were attached to Louis and Camellia, all of them were cut in two.

It was like passing through the hole of a needle that was stabbed in the ground – with such precision, Auguste slashed Louis' shields while riding on a dragon descending in a full force.

Camellia landed with a dumbfounded Louis on her back.

The venue was restless.

Everyone also looked at Auguste with a look that they couldn't believe what happened in front of them.

I could only hear the flapping of Blackcurrant's wings.

While nobody could move, my body moved naturally.

I picked up a lei that was prepared at the noble guests' seat and threw it at him.

Auguste patted the neck of Blackcurrant lightly.

His dragon understood his intention quickly, she spread her wings, made a turn, and rose.

Blackcurrant jumped towards the audience seat and Auguste caught the lei I threw mid-air.

When I waved to Auguste, he responded by raising his arm that had my blue ribbon wound around it.

Loud cheers that seemed to shake the ground reverberated in the venue.

The audience turned over to him, clapping and cheering enthusiastically, praising

Auguste.

Following me, flowers were thrown in succession, and the pair of sincere person and dragon reacted and caught the vibrant flowers and adorned them.

More than anything, they saw Auguste's integrity and riding techniques just like the previous King and Hero, but the citizens seemed to accept him.

That was good.

As expected, whether or not he could ride was the turning point.

In this case, even if he was disqualified, if it was explained that it was not strictly wrong, they might accept Auguste afterwards.

“Auguste! My child! My little hero!”

The King stood up on the rail of the audience seat, opened his arms and shouted at Auguste.

Uwah, this, this was about three stories high.

He might be familiar with the height since he was a dragon knight, but for the onlookers, it was extremely dangerous.

Auguste waved his hand to the King in response, the parent and child were facing each other.

Blackcurrant made numerous somersaults, tailspins, and other acrobatic flights in succession in response to the audience.

As the pair of a person and a dragon was rising high to the sky about to reproduce the deciding blow from the final, something happened at that moment.

“Kyuuu... , gyururuuu...!”

Blackcurrant cried in a sorrowful voice.

At the high altitude, Blackcurrant made a painful cry and started to shake Auguste who was riding on her back.

It was as if she was trying to shake him down.

I had a bad feeling.

I felt the illusion that the cold hands of Death God were stroking my back.

(Something like that... no way... to come so far and be ruined...)

Blackcurrant was spinning her body like a black tornado.

She was more violent than she was during the match, it was a rough movement that didn't care whether she had a rider on her back or not.

My prayer was also in vain, and the boy in black armor had been thrown into the air.

Auguste who was thrown off didn't move a twitch.

I wondered if he lost his consciousness due to the spinning.

Blackcurrant that should have been a friend until just a while ago didn't care about Auguste who kept falling defenselessly, while originally she would have helped him first.

“Auguste-sama!”

I was screaming in spite of myself.

I could only cry out.

I was an alchemist, I didn't prepare anything for this unexpected situation.

The Queen called the name of Auguste in a more sorrowful voice than anyone.

The King called for his own ride and was about to catch him.

But, no one would make it in time.

I couldn't do anything.

Someone was moving in the corner of my eyes.

Opened the bag for alchemists and took out one wand.

It was a wand that I had used, but at the same time, it was also a wand that I had never used.

The head was amber, the shaft was a fossilized griffin's bones.

The handle was a yellow brass, and its surface had a feather pattern.

The core material was a fossil of the wing of archaeopteryx.

—It was the Wand of Feather Falling.

However, different from the normal Feather Falling, this wand was engraved with ancient Aurelia-style praise sentence, and the effect was amplified.

It was the exclusive equipment of Long-Armed Ernst, Duke of Aurelia.

Otou-sama concentrated his mind and shook the wand while targeting the falling Auguste.

Feather Falling, which originally had a range of less than 5 meters, was extended to over 100 meters by the capability of the alchemists' chief.

A magic circle like a white thin membrane spread directly under Auguste, and as soon as he touched it, the magic circle broke into feathers and scattered.

Auguste and the leis were falling gently.

He slowly descended as if he had forgotten about the existence of gravity.

It took a long time for him to fall, while sprinkling magical lights resembling white feathers.

The 'angel' who was longing for the sky was deprived of everything the moment his wish came true, and he was dropped on the ground.

¹ Urizen is the Zoa of conventional reason and law. If you remember, this story had mentioned two other dragons of the King (not the same King, these are the Founder King's), Urthona and Tharmas, which are also named from the four Zoas.

Chapter 35

Burial Chamber of Angels (1)

After Auguste's crash, various people were struggling to investigate and put the situation under control.

The King gave speech during the pause in the ceremony and instructed his direct subordinates, ordering them to control the information and review the facts.

The Queen negotiated directly with the nobility of Lucanrant, and was procuring a well-rounded medical expert.

In addition, two escort dragons were secretly flying around the venue and looking for suspicious people through their eyes and ears.

Otou-sama recovered the magical tool that was attached on Blackcurrant who was in custody and performed analysis of the magic that was covering her.

There were many other people running around after the closing of the spectacular tournament, which I couldn't grasp the reasons.

I took Tirnanog and stood in front of the medical tent where Auguste was brought in. The tent was surrounded by royal soldiers who were guarding it, so that nobody could approach it.

I, of course, was not an exception.

It was supposed to be a measure to protect Auguste, so as not to give people unnecessary misunderstandings.

However, irresponsible speculations and severe slanders were already buzzing around the venue.

The First Prince had stolen another person's dragon and participated in the tournament. He seemed to have used some dubious magic tool on the sacred dragon. It seemed that his cheating had been exposed and he fell from the dragon.

That was a suitable ending for a child of infidelity.

It seemed that the King was hiding it. No one could get close to the prince's tent for that reason.

Ambiguous information was spreading.

Among them, I gradually felt that the bad feelings for Augoste was spreading.

[Erica...]

“Sorry, Tir. Not yet, I... I don’t know what to do.”

[I understand. Tell me when my power is needed. I will be waiting.]

“Thank you.”

Amidst this situation, I was desperately thinking what I could do for myself now.

I hated not doing anything.

But, without being able to do anything, time passed by heartlessly.

How long had time passed?

I heard the sound of several people shoving and pushing from inside the tent.

“Your highness, it’s dangerous if you move suddenly!”

“Release me! Right now... I need to explain directly to my father!”

“You cannot!”

Augoste appeared by rolling up the curtain at the entrance of the tent.

My eyes met with Augoste’s who was shoving the soldiers and the doctor.

“...Augoste-sama.”

“Erica...?”

He had taken off his armor and was dressed in a costume similar to common riding

clothes.

Around his right hand, there was the blue ribbon I gave him.

Auguste stared at me for a while, suddenly weakened, he looked away with a sad expression on his face.

“Let her in.”

“But, Your Highness, His Majesty said not to let anyone pass...”

“I will take responsibility. Please.”

The soldier reluctantly guided me into the tent.

The inside of the tent was divided into two rooms by a curtain.

In the room near the entrance, there were a table of medicine such as medicine boxes and mortars, and a table with scattered parchment papers.

This seemed to be the doctor's room, he told Auguste to rest and began writing something on a document.

In the back room there were a simple bed and a few chairs.

Under the bed, there were wash basins and water jugs that seemed to be used not too long ago.

Auguste sat on the bed, I sat on the chair.

With a hopeless smile on his face, Auguste seemed to be at a loss of what to say.

“It was a promise not to fly.”

“...Sorry.”

“But I didn't come here to blame you.”

“Yeah, about that, sorry. It's not supposed to turn out like this, I must have made you worry, huh?”

Auguste's face was gentle and smiling, but I could see the pain and regret swirling beyond that thin skin.

Somehow, it was hard just looking at him.

This time, it was my turn to feel troubled about what to say.

The silence that occurred while I was choosing my words was hurting my heart painfully.

Forcibly changing the subject, I assembled my words.

“You were magically protected from the fall, but when you were being shaken off, did you have any injury?”

“No, I’m alright. I didn’t know whether my luck was good or whether Blackcurrant was being gentle.”

“In that case, I’m glad but...”

“Hahaha. I was only trying to surprise everyone a little, I guess it worked. Really, what a mess.”

While making a fun of himself, he smiled brightly.

“It was my first time. For the first time, I met a dragon that was not afraid of me excluding Goldberry. *‘I can fly with this guy’*... I thought so, but—”

Auguste looked up at the ceiling of the tent and sighed.

His eyes probably passed beyond the ceiling and were looking up at the blue sky.

The sky that was supposed to be his just a while ago.

“How was the sky?”

“It was great. I thought that the sky is where I belong. It was almost as if I was fusing with the dragon to the very last drop of blood. I could feel the wings hitting the wind, my skin still remembers it.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah, it was good. It was like a dream. When I felt that she was scared of me and wouldn’t fly together, I felt like half of me had been torn off.”

Laughing without force, he furrowed his eyebrows and looked down slightly instead

of shedding tears.

I was shocked, that was the expression of utmost sorrow that he could do.

In addition, what would happen to him if he knew that people believed that he cheated?

A rail that carried Auguste steadily towards the contract beast – I felt the rail that was inviting me to a death flag was laid.

Inside of me, information which was fragmented unexpectedly had clicked on.

Did the dragons fear Auguste?

Oh, so that was the reason for the Magic of Intoxication.

Did she not afraid of him because she was drunk?

I became certain that Blackcurrant had been scared because she broke out of her state of drunkenness after the finals.

Was the spell broken naturally or was it broken by someone?

It was frustrating that while some things seemed to be understood, some things were still missing.

When Auguste and I faced each other silently, some noises could be heard from outside the tent.

“Hmm... what's happening...?”

“Good grief. A noisy guy seems to have arrived.”

It was Louis that appeared vigorously opening the curtain.

Louis looked down at Auguste with a smile full of superiority.

He was wearing the armor that he used for the match and was decorated with leis of honor, which signified as a winner at a glance.

“Ooh, Your Highness Auguste! So you're still stubbornly living! It is a shame that an

incident like that happened!"

Even though Louis was in front of the person himself, he was still rude as usual. Louis who came to the medical tent suddenly drew a chair and sat in front of Auguste.

"Louis, I heard it. It seems that you are the winner, how wonderful."

"Naturally it's because of my ability!"

He spread his hands in a dramatic gesture, and Louis had a proud expression on his face.

"More than that... I heard it, Auguste. Did you attach an unauthorized magic tool on your dragon? Of course, otherwise you will not be my opponent. I thought that I had finally met a rival that could match me. What a shame."

"Magic tool? Sorry, but I don't know anything about that kind of thing."

"Don't be discouraged, Auguste. You can't ride dragons in the usual way, even a baby could understand that. Well, where did you get such a useful tool? Is it Aurelia? Or is it Karkinos?"

Louis' long-winded speech grew increasingly enthusiastic.

His evaluation against Auguste was just a slander based on labelling and speculations. I couldn't bear listening to this anymore.

"Louis-sama, regarding the magic tool, we still do not know the exact information. Otou-sama and the other experts are doing their best to analyse it. So please refrain from speaking lightly about uncertain information."

I interrupted the conversation between the two of them.

As Louis noticed my presence for the first time, he was looking at me in surprise. However, immediately Louis regained himself and smiled nastily.

“What’s this, the daughter of Aurelia of that time, huh. Heeh... so you guys were like that.”

“I don’t know if you were misunderstanding something, but Erica and I are friends.”

“Hmm? If you deny it like that, it becomes increasingly doubtful.”

Louis laughed loudly as if he found it amusing.

“Ahahaha. You really cannot be overlooked. You also seem to have a lot of lust flowing in your blood, to aim for such a child—”

“Not only me and this girl—are you going to insult my mother too, Louis!”

Auguste clenched his fist and raised it overhead.

But, he didn’t move any further.

It seemed that he barely stopped himself because of his reasoning power.

And yet, Louis assumed such a pose as if he was terribly frightened, mocking him.

“Look at this! He will turn to violence when he knows that he cannot win with words! So this is the result of crossbreeding between a low birth and a whore!”

Flame-like sparks seemed to be flickering in the purple eyes of Auguste.

Was it an illusion?

If that so, it felt somewhat strange.

“I see, Louis... sorry about that. Violence is not good.”

“I’m glad you understand. If you understand. This is for you, Auguste. Try to hit me under such circumstances. Surely everyone would think that you are a dirty person who beat up the winner after cheating.”

“That’s right.”

Auguste released his clenched fist and gently hovered around the vicinity of his belt.

It was just around where his sword handle was supposed to be.

However, right now his sword was removed for the sake of his medical treatment.

That was good.

Looking at Louis who was the other party, I was shocked.

Louis was putting his hand on the sword that he wore on his waist.

“Auguste-sama, Louis-sama, what—!?”

“Erica, please. Be quiet. This is a problem between me and Louis.”

Auguste was smiling as he said that.

Why.

I felt that there was a cruel atmosphere in his eyes that was different from usual.

“Hey, Louis, is that all you want to say? On this occasion, I will listen to everything you want to say, you know?”

“Of course. Isn’t it embarrassing that Ignitia royalty cannot ride on a dragon when he’s already ten years old? Ooh, that’s right. You don’t have a single drop of Ignitia’s blood!”

“Hmm, and then?”

Auguste slowly raised his right hand.

It was almost like pulling out his sword.

Louis also pulled out his sword with the same gesture as if an image reflected in the mirror.

I was horrified.

I wondered if Auguste was controlling Louis.

How could this be?

Indeed, people of Ignitia were equipped with telepathic ability that allowed them to control other living things.

But that ability was weak and shouldn’t be able to be extended to humans.

But, in front of me, Louis was pulling out his sword to follow the action of Auguste.

Louis was not even aware that he was holding his sword, he was absorbed in mocking Auguste.

“You are a child of a whore, Auguste! Even though you are not a royalty, you are the Crown Prince! Are you willing to end the history of the venerable Ignitia in your generation?”

“Heeh?”

“When I become a king, you will be less than a retainer! As your father did to my father, I will also assign him to a remote territory and kill him!”

“Hou?”

Auguste attached an invisible sword to his own neck.

Likewise, Louis attached his real sword to his own neck.

Louis' blood was dripping along the surface of his sword.

“That's right, even your father who is silent about his whore wife and his bastard child is a sinner, isn't he? To say that he is the King, is such a breach of trust even allowed! That is a betrayal to this fine country!”

“Hmm. By the way, the blood of the royal family is such a color, huh. It looks like ordinary blood to me.”

“What?... What is this? Why is my sword... huh? It's painful...?”

Finally, Louis seemed to have noticed the anomaly and his face became pale.

Auguste who was looking at his dismay, was smiling cruelly.

“Since you're always proud of yourself, I thought that you're going to have a special color, but it was disappointing.”

“It doesn't move... my arm doesn't move... wait, please wait... somebody, please stop my hand! Anyone! Please help me! I will be killed by myself!”

“Oi, oi, what are you saying, Louis? It's just a story that your arm is equipped with shamefully average capacity unlike yourself. What are you panicking about?”

The soldiers and medical doctor who were outside and inside the tent respectively had collapsed on the floor unnoticed.

They were struggling while lying on the floor with both hands aligned as if they were bound with an invisible rope.

Auguste put force into his hand.

Louis' sword dug into his neck more deeply.

“You are at fault, Louis... you made me this angry.”

“No! Auguste!”

I desperately raised my voice.

Auguste looked back this way.

With an expression as if he was coming to his senses, he was staring at me stunned.

The sound of a sword falling to the floor echoed.

Louis crawled on the floor, holding down his wound while crying.

He was bleeding, but it was not a big deal. There was no life-threatening condition.

That was good.

Surely, if Auguste killed him, his feelings would be terribly hurt.

“Erica... I, just now, what...?”

“Auguste-sama...”

“Aah, I see. This... this is not human power. It is not a power that human beings possess... this is the power that trampled human dignity.”

“That's not true, Auguste-sama!”

“No. It's true. I'm not good. Whether I am father's son or not, I cannot become a king... I shouldn't stay with people...”

Auguste covered his face with one hand, and separated from me while staggering.

I felt like I shouldn't leave him alone.

However, Louis and the soldiers who now had empty eyes were spreading their hands, as if trying to stop me.

“Louis-sama, please stay here!”

“Notgoodnotgoodnotgood... I, I will be w-with you... you c-can’t go...”

“Do, not go, do not, go, do not, go...”

“Yo, you, c-can’t, g-go, can’t, gooo...”

They muttered garbled words with unclear meanings simultaneously.

Their movement was stiff like a puppet.

When I was stuck, Auguste left the tent.

“Auguste-sama! Please wait!”

“Sorry, Erica. Thank you for being kind with me. But, you cannot stay close to me anymore... goodbye.”

“No! Auguste-sama!”

I managed to escape the people who were like puppets and also exited the tent.

However, there was a lot of confusion waiting outside that couldn't be compared to the inside of the tent.

The people had transformed into a flock of dolls with empty eyes.

Hundreds, thousands of people were walking in rows while swaying their bodies.

Everyone murmured meaningless words with an expression like a mask.

I remembered the zombie movie I saw in the previous world.

But these people were still alive, perhaps just being controlled by the telepathic ability.

Some people kept their sanity, such as those from Aurelia who were insensitive to

mental magic and the mages of Harvan who had high magic defense.

However, it seemed that they couldn't move due to the controlled people filling the street.

There was a distinctively different group in this throng of people.

It was a group of dragons who was surrounding Auguste.

Dragons were descending one after the other near Auguste or were flying around him.

The dragons also seemed to be in a state of ambiguousness, they had a relaxed look as if dreaming, following Auguste unstably.

Among them, only Goldberry who was on his shoulder that looked just like usual.

She looked at Auguste and seemed to be comforting him.

“Auguste-sama!”

Auguste didn't turn around, he took a dragon and left.

Just as I was approached by the dragons and the throng of people who were being controlled, his figure had disappeared somewhere.

Chapter 36

Burial Chamber of Angels (2)

Auguste and the dragons were gone, and the people who were like dolls who had lost their souls were closing in.

It was my first time to jump into the zombie-like crowd that were approaching and swaying while muttering nonsense with blank expressions, I felt nervous.

However, when I realized that they didn't attack people like real zombies, I stroke my chest in relief.

Although there was no direct life-threatening risk, caution was necessary.

If I got caught in the flow of the crowd, I didn't know where I would be washed away.

Indeed, I saw some people from Aurelia who kept their sanity being carried far away, surrounded by the controlled people.

Because they were being controlled, the only salvation was that accidents such as shovelling didn't occur.

“Huh? Speaking of which, where is Tir...?”

Tirnanog was more powerful than human beings and he should be able to move through the gap between people as he was tiny.

So it was unlikely that the crowd swept him away.

No way, I wondered if he followed Auguste with other dragons.

In the midst of this great confusion, it would be quite difficult to even think of meeting up.

When I was watching from the shade so as not to be caught up in the crowd, I could see shadows flying about on the roof.

They seemed to be alchemists of Aurelia and mages of Harvan, guessing from their clothes.

Aah, that's right.

Because I tried to move on the ground, I got caught in the crowd.

If that was the case, I needed to move on a place where the people who were being controlled couldn't get in the way, such as on top of the building or in the air.

Searching for a wand suitable for moving in the air such as Levitation or Leap that Tirnanog had put inside the bag.

Hmm, if I only wanted to climb the roof, then I needed Levitation to move upwards, but if I wanted to jump from roof-to-roof, then I needed Leap that would strengthen my jumping power.

Since I was looking for Auguste or Tirnanog, I also needed a wand for that.

“So you are here, Erica. I’m glad you are fine.”

While I was struggling with several kinds of wands, I was unexpectedly spoken to from above my head.

Looking up, there was the figure of Oto-sama who had gathered a group of alchemists and mages.

◆◆◆

The moment when Auguste’s telepathic attack occurred, Oto-sama was analyzing the magic tool collected from Blackcurrant with other alchemists and mages.

He seemed to have noticed something was wrong when the mages fainted from magical power exhaustion one after another while analyzing.

The symptoms were closely resembling how it was if they received continuous high-intensity mental interference.

Oto-sama who recognized that they were in an emergency situation, suspended the analysis of the magic tool and quickly moved to confirm the situation accurately.

He dispatched the staffs collected for analyzing the magic tool for the investigation, and Oto-sama himself attempted to meet up with King Ignatia and Duchess of Harvan.

The Duchess of Harvan, until just before she fainted due to magical power exhaustion, seemed to be struggling to protect the King and his children and other nobles who had lost their consciousness.

When he joined the Duchess of Harvan, he took over the role of protecting the people.

As the result of the investigation, it turned out that the entire Island of Messenger was under the influence of large-scale mental interference.

It was not realistic to evacuate all the citizens of the Kingdom to a safe place, as the only mean to escape the island was by riding a boat or crossing the bridge.

We established the evacuation route for the refugees to the separate residence of Duke of Aurelia which was in the suburbs and only received small influence of mental interference.

After that, Otou-sama organized several teams for the sake of going around to guide the controlled people, medical treatment for wounded people, dealing with the aftermath, and searching for missing people.

It seemed that it was at this time that he was able to join me by chance.

Currently, I was also evacuating to the Duke of Aurelia's separate residence.

In the room where I was ordered to wait, there were the Duchess of Harvan who had fainted due to magical power exhaustion, Ann, King Ignitia who was sleeping magically for safety reason, Tricia and Marquia, and other protected nobleman's children.

“It is not impossible for some outlaws to appear by taking advantage of this confusion. You are at least safe in here. Erica, you must stay here until the fuss gets subsided.”

“Otou-sama! I am a duke's daughter. In situation like this, I have to fulfil my duty.”

“That is why we need someone to protect this place, Erica.”

When I gave a proposal earnestly while hiding my true intention to search for Auguste, he turned the table on me and blocked my movement.

I glanced back slightly, I saw Ann and other people who had fainted.

I couldn't say no when he had referred to the women who were in a defenseless

position.

“Erica... at that time, were you with His Highness Auguste?”

Looking down, I closed my mouth, and Otou-sama asked with a slightly calming tone. When I was feeling troubled of how to answer him, Otou-sama bent over and smiled while looking at my face to cheer me up.

“It’s alright. We will definitely find and protect His Highness Auguste.”

“Otou-sama...”

“The confusion is great, but there is no life-threatening danger. Please wait here with peace of mind.”

Although Otou-sama was gentle, I could only answer ambiguously, and then he left the room.

What should I do.

I had prepared for various situations, but the actual situation surpassed my expectations.

It would have been easier if I had to battle the contract beast.

The fight against the huge ancient monster from the labyrinth search is in easier mode, what do you mean-!?

As a matter of fact, if a battle between a contract supremacy stuffed animal that seemed to come out from magical girl thing¹ and Tirnanog broke out, it would have been a fluffy mascot showdown with a pleasant feeling.

From now on, I wondered if the contract beast would come out.

When I used a bag as a chair and looked at the ceiling to escape reality, there was a sudden rattling noise coming from outside the window

[Erica, so you’re in this place. I was looking for you.]

The one who was waving from outside the window was Tirnanog, who had been missing until a while ago.

I quickly hurried up and opened the window.

I was on the third floor, but he was able to climb it nicely.

Although he was wearing a heavy armor, Tirnanog was amazingly nimble.

Though it might be related to the power of the huge monster Zaratan, one or two armors might not be very heavy for him.

“Tir, where have you been?”

[As you planned, I was pursuing that blonde prince. I have located the place where the signs of the monster are properly monitored.]

“...Plan?”

[What, did you forget, my friend? It is the strategy you had set up. After the blonde prince fell from the dragon in the tournament, you told me to secretly track the guy and find the hiding place of the contract beast, right?]

“Ah, ah—...!”

Due to various things happening at once, I had completely forgotten.

Initially there was such a strategy.

I didn't instruct him to either cancel or continue the strategy, but did Tirnanog track Auguste arbitrarily in that confusion?

“Amazing, Tir! What a fine play~...!”

[Kukukuku, you can praise me more. I'm a very useful guardian.]

“As expected of Tir! Tir is very cool! If this is the case, then let's beat down the contract beast and end the unusual phenomenon right away!”

[That's my favorite development! Leave it to me, whatever monster that appears, it is useless before my wisdom and power!]

I handed the battle bag to Tirnannog and wound a belt with a wand holder above the

decorative dress that I was wearing to watch the tournament to prepare for battle. My tension rose to the unexpected good news.

Because of that, I made a mistake forgetting where I was, and who was around me.

“Erica-oneesama, that golem... no, is that monster possibly Zaratan?”

To that voice, I looked back nervously.

Ann had woken up unnoticed and she had a suspicious look on her face.

“A-Ann-sama, I’m glad you’re well...”

“Thanks to being away from the center of the mental interference, it seems that my Magic Resist was able to block its effect. In order to preserve my magical power, I temporarily set my magical power for mental defense to zero and let myself faint.”

“H-heeh...”

She was the same cool child as ever, huh.

“More than that, the figure closely resembling that Zaratan, a magic mechanism similar to that of Zaratan, and the golem’s voice is similar to Zaratan...”

“Hiih, t-that’s not it. This child is an ordinary golem, Ann-sama. Right, Tir?”

[I, I am a golem. Move. Fight. Spinning.]

Tirnanog walked while swinging like a toy robot with his hands striking out a pose. It was obviously an act no matter how you see it, but now I had no choice but to let it pass.

“Is that so? Although I can see the scratches around his thigh when I blasted him with a Scorching Ray?”

“No way... the exterior is a new armor, so there shouldn’t be any scratches left...”

[I’m fine, Erica. The scratch from when I was tracking you in the deepest layer has recovered.]

“As expected.”

It was a firmly induced interrogation.

Ann-sama, how terrible.

“T-this is... it’s confidential.”

“The one who I respect as my older sister is acting with a mysterious monster that attacks people. Moreover, with suspicious speech and conduct for some reason. If it was Erica-oneesama, could you stay silent in this situation?”

“Guh... please don’t tell anyone.”

[Wait, Erica. Leave this to me.]

Tirnanog advanced before Ann, as if to protect me.

Perhaps he would try to persuade Ann.

I felt that I rely on Tirnanog for everything, I was useless.

[The youngest mage of the eastern mages... no, Ann. It can’t be helped if you are going to disturb us.]

“What are you planning to do, monster Zaratan.”

[Kukuku, what, you just have to sleep a little. I will not take your life.]

“At last you revealed your true nature. Get away from Erica-oneesama!”

Tirnanog flicked his sharp claws and Ann drew her staff.

No, wait, why was this becoming more complicated?

I hurriedly came between them.

“Wait a minute! Both of you calm down!”

[Do not be afraid, Erica. I will finish this in a moment. Of course, I will do it in a way that wouldn’t leave a scratch on me.]

“Do not think that I am the same as I was at that time. Likewise, I will annihilate you.”

“I said, wait a minute! Tir, Ann is my friend, so don’t attack her!”

[...Umu.]

“Ann-sama, Zaratan is... now his name is Tirnanog, but this child is my guardian beast! In order to solve the mental interference case, this child’s cooperation is necessary!”

“Resolving... the case...?”

Tirnanog obligingly stopped his intimidation and Ann stopped directing her staff. She looked at me with a complicated expression as if troubled.

“At the center of that incident, there is my friend. I cannot tell you the details yet, but I have to go there.”

“Somehow... you are sticking your neck into troublesome things again.”

“Ah, yes. This is shameful. But since the risk of endangering my life is a little this time, please be relieved.”

As of now, my relationship with Auguste was good, so the death flag was broken.

Besides, right now we entered a development which didn’t exist in the original scenario.

Even if this major incident happened in the original, it was not something to laugh about.

If it was not in the original, it could be said to be a kind of a safe route that didn’t interfere with the original death flag.

Maybe, I definitely wanted to believe that.

Well, frankly that was me deluding myself for a moment.

“So it is an information about something called a death flag from some oracle, huh...”

“Do you not believe in me?”

“No, it is not that... I, Erica-oneesama, as a human—I am afraid and worried that your instinct for survival is broken.”

I wondered if that was true.

It might be so.

It was said that I had zero danger sense as well in my previous life.

[Do not worry, Ann. In the case of Erica, I will definitely protect her. Since you had fought with me, you should know my strength well.]

Ann looked into the eyes of Tirnanog through the surface cap.

Tirnanog had a confident gaze and stared right back at her.

Eventually, Ann sighed as if she had lost her power.

“Really, it can’t be helped. Promise me, if you are in danger, please escape.”

“I understand. I will not do anything dangerous this time, so please be relieved, Ann-sama.”

“Zaratan—Tirnanog-sama, Erica-oneesama said that, but she will definitely be unreasonable, Tirnanog-sama please protect her.”

“Uuh.”

[Leave it to me. I know the personality of this girl. I am going to do that since the beginning.]

Ann grasped the forearm of Tirnanog as they shook hands.

Tirnanog nodded back strongly.

Both of them misunderstood me terribly.

Even though I tried to avoid danger so that I wouldn’t die all the time.

“I wish I could accompany you, but my immature Magic Resist will cause inconvenience for the two of you.”

“Ann-sama...”

“I will protect this place on the behalf of Erica-oneesama. So please make sure to come back.”

“Yes.”

I answered her with a smile so that at least I could remove some anxiety off her. Tirnanog jumped on the window frame and was beckoning me closer.

I pulled out a wand from the wand holder.

The shaft material was bundled reed and coiled wire was wrapped around it.

The head of the wand was magnetite, and the legs of grasshopper, rabbit, and frog as the core material.

It was the Wand of Leap that dramatically strengthens the user's jumping power.

If Levitation was a wand specialized for vertical movement, Leap was rather oriented in the lateral direction.

It couldn't be used where there was no scaffolding, but it was perfect when you wanted to jump roof-to-roof like this time.

"Take care. I wish for luck to be with Erica-oneesama."

"Thank you very much, Ann-sama. Good luck to you too."

[Let's go, Erica!]

"Yes, let's go, Tir!"

Tirnanog and I jumped out to the Kingdom which was still dominated by chaos.

Head to the center of this unusual phenomenon, Auguste who was the cause of this confusion.

¹ Referring to Cardcaptor Sakura, I think. Or maybe Puella Magi Madoka Magica.

Chapter 37

Burial Chamber of Angels (3)

“Tir, Auguste is here, isn’t he?”

[Umu. That’s right. It seems that while I was turning my back, those guys had gathered.]

I looked up at the aforementioned place from on top of the rooftop of a building.

Before our eyes, the majestic appearance of the cathedral which touched the sky was towering above us.

Today, there were many dragons around the cathedral.

The winged dragons were flying around the cathedral or perching on the steeple.

Dragons without wings were also crowding tightly in the square in front of the cathedral.

When compared with the dragons surrounding Auguste when the mental interference began, they had a somewhat empty look.

If I looked closely, I could see dragons that had fainted.

[If that blonde prince is causing this situation, that guy seems to possess a power that exceeded human domain.]

Admiring words spilled from Tirnanog’s mouth in amazement.

“By the way Tir, if you also received such strong mental interference, wouldn’t it be terrible?”

[That’s a foolish question. I am not as insensitive as you are, but I am also from Aurelia. It is easy to block the mental interference.]

“What a relief.”

We got off to the square and approached the cathedral.

If it was dangerous, we intended to return to a higher place using Leap once more.

However, the movements of the dragons that were trying to block our path were somewhat slow and easy to avoid.

The closer we got to the cathedral, dragons who fainted and dragons with sluggish movements were increasing.

Without much difficulty, we got into the cathedral.

“I thought for sure that we would get much more intense disturbance.”

[Perhaps the prince actually wants to be rescued... or rather, even dragons' heart cannot tolerate this strong mental interference for a long time.]

“Then, we have to find him before it's too late.”

[Umu. That's right. Let's hurry. The suspicious presence gradually getting stronger. I can smell the pungent stench of the beast.]

Tirnanog led me through the inside of the cathedral.

Small dragons were entering the building, but all of them fainted and fell down.

It saved me some trouble, but I became worried about Auguste and the dragons.

If the dragons couldn't enter, then wouldn't he be alone right now?

As we were getting closer to Auguste, the interiors and the exhibits of the cathedral becoming more and more eerie.

It was a dreadful picture of Hell as if it implied what was going to happen.

Originally this was a locked route, but all the doors were unlocked by Auguste who came in here first.

I knew this route as well.

I unconsciously touched my wand holder and the alchemists' silk gloves to confirm their existences.

How was I going to deal with this unexpected situation with my prepared supplies?

Right now, I was lamenting my preparation internally such as, '*I wish I had keep it like that at that time*', or '*I should have prepared that too*'.

[Do not be afraid. I will be there for when you couldn't get through this.]

"Yes, I'm counting on you, Tir."

And then, we opened the last door.

There, it was the only mural painting depicting God's figure in this cathedral.

To the illusion as if I had been glared at by the grotesque-looking sun, cold chills ran through my spine.

There was only Goldberry in the center of the God's mural painting room.

She fainted while being wrapped in a black riding jacket that Auguste was wearing when I parted with him.

I hurriedly rushed over to check her, but to my relief she was still breathing.

Goldberry seemed to just fall into a deep sleep.

But, there was no Auguste.

From the presence of Goldberry and the jacket, there was no doubt that he came here once.

Where did he go?

Why did he have to go through this mural painting room, which was a dead end?

[Erica, the smell of the prince is cut off in this room... because the stench of the beast is too strong, I do not know his exact location.]

"No, that information is more than enough."

I thought that it might be unnecessary, but I also brought the wands for exploring the ruins as a precaution.

I opened my bag and took out the Wand of Glam Sight.

First of all, the standard routine in case of trouble.

Shook the Wand of Glam Sight and a sparkling magic circle was converging on my eyes.

In the field of view through the magical sight to see traces of magical power, there was no evidence of dubious magic.

[It seems that it isn't a magical gimmick.]

"It would have been better if I have Urd Sight..."

Urd Sight was a joint development product with a mage who could use space manipulation magic.

For that reason, it was a pretty rare item and the price was high.

Even though my older brother could pay for it, I had to give up because I felt daunted by the expensive cost.

Since it couldn't be helped, I had to think of something else.

This was also the basic rule of alchemists.

I took out another wand from my bag.

This wand was a set with a scroll.

The scroll was made of parchment in which the grid was burned.

On the stick head was a magnetite in which a compass relief was engraved.

The material of the shaft was the keel of a ship which had sailed without sinking for more than ten years, and the one used for the core material was a star crystal which was carved into the figure of a sextant.

At the butt end of the wand hung a miniature anchor which was made by melting an actual anchor.

It was the Wand of Magic Mapping.

It was a relatively new kind of wand made by combining Auto Scribing for manuscripts with Siren's Echo which was produced by people of Aurelia who were voyagers to sense reefs.

This wand had the power to pass through obstacles to some extent and revealed the structure of the building.

“Light of the star, light up my destination.”

Shook the Wand of Magic Mapping.

Pale yellow light was lit from the head of the wand, and a magic circle of the same color expanded in a circular form.

When the magic circle was able to spread to a radius of about 5 meters, the magic characters that composed the magic circle broke and became an anchor shape and splashed all over the room.

The pale light that was lit on the head of the wand became soaked in ink, and she pressed it against the scroll.

When the shape of the compass was pressed against the scroll like a stamp, the light of the wand moved to the sign of the compass.

The light spreading in the room converged on the scroll's compass and burst in a flash of light like a lightning.

The ink automatically ran over the parchment from the compass sign, and the structure of this building was drawn out by magic.

“I found it! Below, there is a hidden space!”

[So it is not magic, it was hidden by a mechanic trick.]

The place where there should be a hidden space seemed to be just under the mural painting of God.

—*The contract beast sleeps under the sun.*

Auguste said that there was such an old poem.

Ignitia's only god was the God of Sun.

“Below, there is the contract beast... but, how did Auguste go under this...”

Should I have bought Urd Sight even if it was somewhat expensive?

This was the time when that magic became convenient.

While I held my head in regret, Tirnanog came forward to the mural painting.

[I am here for moments like this.]

“I see. That’s right. Since it’s bad if we destroy the mural painting, please destroy the floor.”

[Leave it to me. Erica, release my limiter.]

I nodded and cast a command word to control the star steel armor.

“Cage, hold, chain.

For a short while, unravel that commandment, enclosed it in iron and awaken your memory.

Cover my friend’s arms and armor, show us the gallant figure engraved on his body.”

Responding to my words, the armor that covered the arms of Tirnanog began to emit light.

Tirnanog, who was wearing star steel armor that could expand infinitely by absorbing magical power—changed his appearance to the shape set instantly by the magical power of the Philosopher’s Stone.

When the light went out, both arms of Tirnanog became bigger and his nails were sharper and became longer.

[I’m ready.]

“Yosh, go ahead and do it!”

[Roger!]

Tirnanog’s arms flashed like a black gale.

Every time he swung his arms, the stone floor was torn apart and went flying.

In ten seconds, there was a hole for people to pass through and I could see a staircase

hidden inside.

“You did great, Tir!”

[Umu. This armor, it's pretty comfortable... now then, Erica. It looks like this is it. Not only the stench of the beast, but I also feel a devastating magical power.]

“Yes... I could barely see it.”

Through the Glam Sight, I could perceive the magical power that was shining like a red mist drifting.

It seemed to be high-concentration of pure magical power which couldn't be analysed for detailed information.

I took out a star crystal lamp that didn't radiate heat and put it on my belt, and put the Wand of Feather Falling and Levitation in the wand holder as precaution.

Then, Tirnanog and I went down the steep and dark staircase.

Next to the spiral staircase, coffins with several lids opened were placed.

I was frozen for a moment because the inside of those coffins seemed to be visible.

However, the coffins weren't stuffed with dead bodies and were stuffed with white flowers instead.

The empty coffins were carved with names.

Some of them were names that I knew.

Founder King Guillaume, Severe King Jean... both of them were the kings of Ignitia who were praised as gods.

[It seems that this cathedral was once the royal castle, is this the Kings' Tomb?]

“No. Ignitia's dragon knight kings do not sleep under the ground. When they die, they will be going back to the sky.”

According to the knowledge I got in preparation, there was no tomb for the kings of Ignitia.

The prideful Ignitia's dragon knights were buried by dragon funeral.

Their dead bodies were eaten by the dragons they used to ride and their souls would become one with the dragon.

The dragon who ate the King was the grave in the sky for the King who they loved.

They were referred as Throne.

As long as they were still alive, there would be a Sky Throne to protect the soul of the King in Heaven.

The Throne of the Founder King was still flying through the Ignitia's sky.

Therefore, it was not necessary for Ignitia to have an underground tomb for their kings.

The stairs were over and we reached the bottom of the cathedral.

A coffin was also placed in front of the door where the contract beast was supposed to be.

The coffin that seemed newer than the other coffins was not yet filled with flowers.

Looking at the name engraved on the new coffin, I felt blood drained from my face.

—*Auguste Ignitia.*

The name of the boy that I was looking for was engraved there.

❖❖❖

I hid myself halfway behind the wall while holding a wand, and Tirnanog opened the door.

It was a room that was slightly narrower than the mural's room, it was roughly shaped like a cube.

On the walls, ceilings, and the floors, grooves imitating sketches of eyes and eyelids were carved.

Somehow the grooves were faintly radiating lights.

Apart from the grooves carved on the surface, there was no other feature in the room, no statue nor painting.

In the center of the room, there was Auguste who was standing with his back facing me.

Chapter 38

Burial Chamber of Angels (4)

“Tell me, am I father’s... King Henry Ignitia’s son?”

Auguste’s question echoed in the hidden room.

I was going to answer him in reflex, but stopped.

I thought it was a question for me, but his line of sight was facing another place.

It sounded like an invisible conversation partner was there.

“So, I am a human? This power, what the heck is this?”

With a serious tone of voice, Auguste’s question continued.

I couldn’t see his expression, he was turning away from me.

“...You always use gentle words for my ears. Always say something that is convenient for me. You are a liar, you twist the truth as much as you like.

Aah, I know. Really, because my heart is weak, I cannot believe your words.

I shouldn’t run away... from the truth, from myself, and from you.”

Auguste cut off his words and looked back slowly.

“...You followed me to a place like this, Erica.”

Auguste’s expression was covered with a calm smile, even though he was appealing to someone with sorrow as if coughing up blood until just now.

Auguste wouldn’t even show his sorrowful expression, because then his heart would

terribly hurt.

In a few days of friendship, I couldn't step on the other side of the smiling mask.

But, it didn't matter.

What I wanted right now was not caring for Auguste's heart.

After we escaped from the fate of destruction, we could slowly heal the wounds of his heart.

"Auguste-sama, let's go home. It will still be in time."

"Be in time? What is? What do you mean 'in time'?"

"That is..."

Unintentionally, I was lost for words.

Auguste's amethyst colored eyes shook.

"Everything, it's all too late. Things that once got into the heart of a person cannot be wiped away easily. To reverse the suspicions that had entered, I need great power... that is, the power that can cause miracles."

Auguste said with sharp words.

"My mother has always believed in me. My father also tried to believe in me, no matter how doubtful it was.

I want to give my parents the results they wanted.

I want to be the Auguste they wanted."

I couldn't possibly understand his feelings.

I didn't know about Auguste's three years of suffering that had begun at the age of seven.

What kind of experience did he have, that he had to resort to this forbidden magic?

We had been together for the last few days, but I didn't try to understand him.

But, it shouldn't be a thing that could stop his ruin.

Even if someone else who knew nothing interfered unnecessarily, it should be fine.

“Even so! Auguste-sama, you shouldn't have to sacrifice yourself!”

“Sacrifice... Erica has seen through everything, huh.”

To my plead, Auguste laughed thinly in a self-deprecating manner.

“You knew about the magic, you knew and hid it.”

“Sorry. I lied to you.”

“I don't want you to apologize. I want you to give this up...”

“I already decided, Erica.”

Blocking my words, Auguste said so with a lost voice.

I wondered why he had a fragile smile on his face that seemed like he would disappear somewhere.

“Thank you for being my friend, Erica.”

“Why are you saying that now? It's as if we won't be friends from now on.”

It was almost like a last farewell.

Since he was one of my few friends, I would be troubled if he quitted from being my friend.

As I quickly told him that, Auguste seemed to close off.

Or, he could forcibly stop his emotion when someone drew near, I wondered whether it was good.

“If my wish came true, I will surely disappear.”

“...No way.”

“So, I'm glad I could meet you again in the end.”

Silvery light flared in Auguste's hand.

It was a knife with a strange design.

It seemed that there was something like that in the cathedral exhibit.

The problem was what he was going to do with that.

"Don't do it!"

Auguste made a small slash on his palm quickly before Tirnanog and I could rush over to him.

"If only one miracle can happen, I wish for the 'me' that I should have been.

Not the 'me' that is right here, but the 'me' that is confident, and never doubt myself.

The 'me' who can ride the dragons freely and dance in the sky, and make my father and mother proud.

If I can get it, I don't need my heart—"

Drops of blood were dripping from his hand.

But before that dripping blood touched the floor, the blood disappeared as if it had been licked by something invisible.

The purple eyes of Auguste quietly closed.

"According to the old pact, as a price for my wish, I will give my guardian my blood, meat, and soul,—I dedicate everything."

Strength faded from Auguste's body, he looked up to the sky and fell down.

At the same time, flame flared up behind him.

The flame burned red and reached about twice the height of an average person's

height.

A person-like shadow flickered in the flame.

Two arms emerged from between the tongues of the raging flame and hugged Auguste.

「愚かな子……

こんなにも心がボロボロになるまで
思い悩んでしまうなんて。



ああ、それにしても、なんという皮肉。
その心に刻まれた傷故に、
妾たち獸の目には、
お前の魂は
たとえようもなく
美しく映るのだから

[Foolish child... you make my heart worn-out with worries.

Ah, even so, what irony is this?

Because of the scars carved in your heart, in your eyes, your soul that cannot be compared reflects so beautifully.]

The flame gradually became smaller and the person hidden in the fire revealed their appearance.

Voluminous blonde hair of the color of the sun, reminiscent of the lion's mane.

Tanned skin reminiscent of the burning desert.

The heat of the flame turned into threads and weaved a red dress of the South, and the light condensed and turned into golden accessories.

It was a beautiful and terrifying woman that made me seem wild and ferocious.

She looked young, but she also seemed to be old.

She looked immature, but also appeared to be well-developed.

I couldn't guess her age from her appearance, but it was no wonder.

Because, this woman, no matter how I looked she was not a human being.

She couldn't be measured by human scale.

Above all, it was her eyes that cemented the thought that she was not a human.

Golden pupils with vertically elongated iris, reminiscent of a cat-family carnivorous beast.

Slightly lifted, big pair of eyes.

Sense of intimidation and dread that seemed to clogged my breath just by looking.

Attraction and sense of security that seemed to melt my heart just by looking.

Just by looking at the pair of eyes that made conflicting impressions, my instinct understood that she was a foreign being in the human world.

“Palug-san...? No way, you are the contract beast...?”

The person who no matter how I looked was the self-proclaimed devil, Palug only smiled while narrowing her eyes.

I received that smile as affirmative.

I couldn't mistake that face.

But, even if I got the confirmation, I couldn't believe that she was that self-proclaimed devil.

The impression was different from the time when we met in the God's mural painting room or on the terrace of the royal castle.

Right now the obvious indications of a monstro was coiling around her, I would even be convinced if I was told that she was not truly the self-proclaimed devil.

Palug laid Auguste on the floor with a gesture as if treating a precious treasure.

It was a compassionate gesture like a mother.

[Well, I never expected to you to come to a place like this... Erica-ojouchan?]

“Palug-san, if you are the contract beast, then this conversation will be easier. I beg you, do not sign a contract with Auguste, please.”

Why was she the contract beast?

I wondered why she didn't grant Auguste's wish so far even though she was the contract beast.

I pushed back all those doubts and decided to convince Palug.

Because if the contract was to be fulfilled it would become the contract of destruction, I needed to stop the contract beast no matter what.

Truly, I was even prepared to battle if needed.

However, since the contract beast was Palug, I might be able to get rid of the contract without needing to fight.

“If you fuse with Auguste-sama for the contract, six years in the future you will be in a rampaging state.”

[I know.]

“I do not know the reason, but the contract beast... you cannot withstand the fusion with Auguste-sama.”

[I know.]

“If you are in a rampaging state, there is a risk of killing people. Besides, by separating from Auguste once again, he will lose the ability to ride a dragon. This time, forever.”

[That's why I said, I know.]

After Palug laid Auguste, she looked backward slowly.

Unlike the gentle eyes that were pointed towards Auguste before, listless eyes stared at me.

[Wait, Erica! Do not get any closer to her!]

“Eh...?”

[Be careful, just because her body is humanoid, that doesn't necessarily mean her heart is the same as human's.]

“But, Palug-san is...”

Light flashed in front of my eyes.

At the same time, there is a black shadow before my eyes.

The armor of the left forearm of Tirnanog was scratched.

Palug's pose was different from a few seconds ago, she was in a posture as if brandishing her right hand.

It was only these two ‘results’ that I could confirm.

In a split of second, it seemed that some battle had began between these two people... no, two beings.

[Oh my~, such a smart snake. I thought I'd give you a gentle end in a moment before you could figure out what happened.]

[You finally show your true identity, female fox! I thought you were suspicious since the beginning!]

Tirnanog stood in front of Palug as if to protect me.

No matter how I looked at this, fighting was unlikely to be avoided.

But, I didn't know why Palug would try to kill me.

I mean, did I raise a death flag without noticing?

Please forgive me for being surprise.

“Tir, ‘since the beginning’, but you didn’t...”

[I told you. Do not be deceived, this is not a devil. Probably, that guy is not a devil, but a kind of a phantom beast. If we ignore the definition's correctness, it may be intuitively easier to understand to call her a divine beast.]

“A divine beast...? Palug-san is...?”

Palug-san shook her head.

The golden hair that looked like a lion's mane was shaking like a kabuki play in my previous life.

From her head, ears resembling a lion's came out, both of her arms were covered with short golden fur, and her sharp nails grew even longer.

From the gap of her dress that was opened from the back to the waist, a lion-like tail stretched and swayed.

Golden eyes stared at us between the turbulent hair.

[Before it was a fox and now a divine beast, you keep calling me as you like. Snake, do you have bad eyes?]

[Nuuuuu...! Woman, you bastard, you dare calling me a snake!?]

Tirnanog kicked the floor and shot towards Palug.

The moment his black claws tried to reach Palug, that flash of light clashed again with his claws.

Tirnanog who was wearing a heavy armor was blown off and he came back in front of me after somersaulting in the air.

[I am at disadvantage with this body... Erica, release all my restraint.]

“Y-yes, I understand!”

I cast an order for the armor that Tirnanog was wearing so that it could be shed mid-air.

Star steel brought out malleability equal to gold by pouring magical power and gained hardness comparable to steel.

Fortunately magical power exist abundantly, so another hidden function was built in Tirnanog's armor.

“Open the cage, release the constraints, torn the chains, all commandments will shatter and turn into stardust.

My magic is an invisible furnace. My law is an invisible mold.

My spell is an invisible anvil. My curse is an invisible hammer.

Release the memory engraved on iron.

Return the true appearance and cover my friend. Stardust armor”

As if hearing the command words that I had spoken, magic letters of ancient Aurelia emerged faintly on the armor that covered Tirnanog.

From the Philosopher's Stone which had integrated with Tirnanog's soul, lots of magical power flowed into the star steel armor.

The star steel armor that covered Tirnanog was breaking in the form of letters and fluttered in the wind like petals.

Tirnanog who exposed his liquid body was expanding more and more.

He was as big as an elephant, and his figure was like a dragon.

Star steel, which dissembled in the form of letters, adhered to the liquid epidermis which shaped the figure as he was when we met at the megalithic altar.

The fragments that once again covered Tirnanog like fish scales gave off a strong light all the time.

When the light dimmed, the star steel which looked like scales merged into the huge armor of the black dragon.

[My, my, you think you're going to win just by growing bigger?]

[You should know that it's not just my size that has changed!]

Tirnanog, who completed the transformation in a split of second, shot all the way towards Palug.

The claws of Tirnanog which were brandished as he moved first with all his power, were struck against the golden divine beast.

A thunderous roar as if the air itself exploded shook the whole hidden room.

Right. This is something I had always want to write but can't because of spoilers.

The name of Palug herself came from Cath Palug, a monstrous cat from Welsh legend. (source). And in this story, all the cat monsters in various legends are one and the same. That including the legend about Sphinx. So don't be confused that the story behind Palug is a mix of everything.

And about the beasts classification. Humans only divide them into two classification, which are magical beasts and phantom beasts. Contract beast is not a classification, it's just that: a beast that performs a contract.

I guess divine beast is a beast that is stronger than phantom beast, but it's still in the classification of a phantom beast. Since the characteristics of phantom beasts are: can understand and speak human language, stronger and harder to elucidate than magical beasts, can manipulate systematized magic, and only few sightings and encounters.

Chapter 39

Burial Chamber of Angels (5)

Giant Tirnanog's star steel-coated claws struck Palug who had shown her identity as a monster.

Too much thunderous roar, I shut my eyes unintentionally.

When I opened my eyes cautiously, there was a sight that made me doubt my eyes.

Despite the fact that he was several times bigger than her, Palug had blocked the claws of Tirnanog with one hand.

How terrifying.

I was deceived by her figure, but she really was a monster.

[Oh, you do not seem to be the underling of the King of Serpents.

—You are a man-made fake dragon. As a matter of fact, you shouldn't be able to counter me.]

[Fake!? Insolence!! I... I, I cannot tolerate any more than that!]

Tirnanog repeated his attack in his rage.

Palug parried the claws away when they were a hair's breadth away, warding off that attack rather easily.

She did everything with minimum movements.

Tirnanog gradually appeared irritated, on the other hand the expression of Palug was still full of composure.

(King of Serpents... wait, that was the name of the monster that came out in the story of the contract beast that Auguste was talking about.)

Taking the momentary gap, Palug turned to counterattack.

Palug's claws slipped through Tirnanog's defense and slashed his shoulder.

It was a very quick attack, faster than my eyes could follow.

The armor of the attacked shoulder glowed red as if it was exposed to high temperature and had scars in the form of claws.

The spell engraved on the armor immediately started and the wound was closed with the magical power of the Philosopher's Stone.

I was glad that it could be automatically repaired if it was only damaged lightly.

She would be aiming at the same place where the armor was destroyed.

Even so, she had to have a dreadful attack power to be able to damage the star steel armor with her bare hands.

[You said I was insolent, but you are much more insolent, Fake Black Dragon. If you are an animal-like beast, then you must submit yourself to someone who is stronger than you.]

[Ridiculous! If it is the providence to submit yourself to the stronger one, then you will show your belly and roll over, you monster cat woman!]

Tirnanog made a sweeping motion with his armor-covered long tail.

Palug lightly jumped over it.

However, it seemed that was exactly Tirnanog's aim.

Despite his crumbling posture due to the tail sweep, Tirnanog launched an attack with his claws.

It was just like bending the joints of his arms in the opposite direction.

It was a blow that could also be said as expected from the monster Zaratan who could change his body to amorphous liquid.

Nevertheless, it was impossible for Palug to evade the unexpected surprise attack in the air.

Tirnanog's nails pierced Palug's belly—or so it looked like, but it seemed that she moved so that the nails missed her body.

Palug put her nails deeply in the star steel that covered Tirnanog's arm and instead turned his hand into a steel bar like a gymnast.

The armored arm was twisted and the unpleasant sounds of metal being bent echoed. Tirnanog's legs left the floor.

The situation had reversed, Palug was standing on the ground, while the body of Tirnanog was lifted and floated in the air.

No matter how much she tried to twist the joints, she couldn't damage Tirnanog's inside.

Tirnanog was able to freely change his body between the solid and liquid form.

However, some time lag was required for the star steel armor to change its shape.

Utilizing the slight time lag, it seemed that Palug twisted the armor joints, not Tirnanog, and sealed his movement.

Palug knocked Tirnanog to the floor as it was.

[Well then, please repent. I will let you go this time, strange young serpent.]

[Gaaaaah! Who are you to tell me that!]

Tirnanog pulled out his liquefied forearm from his brachium, kicked the floor with his remaining three limbs and retreated.

The armor which remained in the arms of Palug became light particles after a few seconds, then converged and united again on Tirnanog's forearm.

The battle between the two monsters were in a different scale.

I stood frozen as I was captivated by it, but I finally returned to my senses as the escaping Tirnanog appeared before me.

[Guuh... this is regrettable, but with my power right now, I cannot win against that woman...]

“What should I do? Escape at once?”

[No. If you cannot win with your strength alone, you can win with other things. Even if you have a trump card... no, you have brought something, right?]

“I got it.”

I took out my trump card from the wand holder and gave it to Tirnanog.

It was Wand of Disintegration.

The head was a regular dodecahedron magnetite, and the shaft material was the axle of the water wheel that had been used for more than ten years.

What was used as the core material was space-compressed twenty liters of aqua regia. The surface of the wand was inscribed with seventeen ancient characters which were now indecipherable.

Tirnanog opened the armor around his jaw and swallowed the wand.

Magical energy absorbed from the wand circulated through the amplification mechanism laid out in his body.

A black ray accompanied by a black spark resembling electricity was emitted from the mouth of Tirnanog.

Since it was amplified in his body, it became a very condensed beam like a dragon's breath.

Even the divine beast with overwhelming speed seemed to have been unable to avoid the beam, and Palug was hit by the black beam directly.

Palug who was struck by the Disintegration light beam became a distorted phantom image of semitransparent seven colors.

It seemed like the flickering images of a broken television, it was a strange phenomenon.

However, it only lasted for a moment and Palug quickly restored herself.

No matter what kind of monster the opponent was, the Disintegration light beam always destroyed every matter and turned them into fine particles with no exception.

Even though that was how it supposed to be, Palug was standing there intact.

[Oh my, what a dangerous magic. I'm glad that the beam didn't hit the precious Prince.]

[You bastard..., how did you...!?]

[Do not misunderstand. I got disintegrated properly. I just converged and restored myself instantly.]

Palug who was checking the movement of her body by rotating her shoulders, was smiling sneeringly.

While humming a random tune, she gradually approached Tirnanog.

[It was a good attack. I would be annihilated if I made a mistake. But, I guess your biggest mistake was thinking that I was a matter]

[If you are not a matter, then what are you!]

[As you can see—]

I could only see Palug took a step forward.

In the next moment, the speed of Palug exceeded my perceptual ability and disappeared, leaving behind afterimages on my retina.

The only indication that she had moved was the red flash of light that marked her trajectory as she passed through.

[—heat, and light]

Strong light emitted from Palug and I covered my eyes slightly.

When I looked again, there was Tirnanog who was divided into six lying down there.

More precisely, what was there was an armor that had been blown and destroyed into six pieces, and Tirnanog who had become liquid and couldn't keep his shape.

The star steel armor that was supposed to be durable was torn apart and the cut-off sections were red hot with heat as if melting.

Tirnanog's main body seemed to be barely alive, and the black liquid was wriggling as to avoid the heated metal parts.

His body seemed to be struck with the heat directly, black smokes were rising along with the smell of burning meat.

"Tir!"

[Guuuuuhh!? This is bad... for me to get such damages...]

"Are you alright!? Don't die!"

[Ah, do not worry... I won't die... but, I cannot fight anymore... let me sleep, for a while...]

Tirnnaog retreated into my bag as a liquid that had lost the shape of a dragon.

A considerable part of him seemed to have been burned down by Palug, and it seemed that only a small part of the black liquid could move.

He was heavy, but not heavy enough for me to be unable to carry him.

It was good that even with my battle bag alone, it was a reasonably light weight structure.

[Erica..., run, away...]

After saying those words, Tirnanog became quiet.

Shaking the Wand of Glam Sight quickly, I could see that the built-in spell was still running.

To my relief, he was still alive.

I wanted to think that he was just becoming dormant to recover himself.

Picking up my bag, facing towards the exit in front of me, a mass of magical structure that I had never seen before was swaying and complexly intertwined.

In the overlapped normal vision, the figure of the female beast appeared.

[I will not let you escape. The nuisance has been removed with great pains, and now there's only you and me.]

It was over.

With eyes that looked like the color of gold melting inside of a furnace, Palug laughed.

What should I do.

How could I escape from a monster opponent who even beat Tirnanog in speed.

Suddenly, I noticed that a string of characters that I had seen in a part of a scripture was included on the thing that was surrounding Palug.

It looked like characters from the Ancient Romulus era.

Because there were only few opportunities to see the characters of Ancient Romulus, naturally it was a language that I couldn't read yet.

I wondered when did I see it.

Was it from the scripture in one of the exhibit of the cathedral, or was it—

(Aah! It's a part of the inscription that was carved in the obelisk!)

In my head, suddenly many pieces of information became connected by a single thread.

The contract beast had supremacy over the serpents.

The guardian angel of the Founder King gave him the power to manipulate the dragons.

An angel who had the head of a lion drawn on the only God's mural painting.

An angel holding a medicine bottle.

The contract beast saved people by eating the disease.

The lynx who ate the demon of ill-health became a charm.

The divine beast possessed nails that emitted heat.

The sword of fire that was held by the angel.

Her body was not a matter, it was made of heat and light.

In my previous life, what did they told me the angels were made of?

This was exactly the opposite from the legend of Zaratan.

Originally, she was a monster called Palug.

However, as she was called by multiple names, along the way people remembered her as separate monsters.

“You are not a devil, that was what that child... Tirnanog had said.”

[Hmm. Then if I am not a devil, what am I?]

“Palug-san, are you the angel who gave the Founder King the capability to control the dragons?”

Palug placed her golden hair-covered forelimb on her chest, looked up to the Heaven with an ecstatic smile.

Her shoulders trembled, and soon her smile was replaced with laughter.

[Kukuku... ahaha, AHAHAHAHAHA—

I am impressed, Erica-ojouchan.

In just a few short years, two people have already uncover my true identity.

Moreover, one of them is a woman of a different ethnic who is not even a royalty of Ignitia.

I have lived for thousands of years, but this is my first time.]

Suddenly, Palug ceased her laughter and bowed with an elegant gesture.

[That's right, alchemist Erica Aurelia.

I am the First Messenger of the only Supreme God.

One who was born from the left eye of the thousand-armed Sun that is illuminating the world.

The name that God bestowed me was Pestilence.

The name that was bestowed by my King, the Founder King Guillome Ignitia of the First Generation, was Cath Palug.

I am the Messenger.

I am the One who wield the Sword of Fire.

I am the One who remove the disease and control the serpents.

I am the One who protect young children and hear people's wishes... or I was.]

As if there was a shimmer of hot air rising up, my field of vision was distorted for a moment.

From the left eye of Palug, thick liquid like droplets of blood were falling down her cheek like tears.

The light emitted from the pattern of eyes carved on the wall changed from white to red, and as if to be in sync with the left eye of Palug, strange red liquid flowed out.

Before I noticed, the temperature of the room was rising so much that my body became sweaty.

Despite this, I felt fear that made chills ran through my spine this whole time.

[I have lost my former power. It is no more than a residue left.

I used too much power slaughtering the giants, slaughtering the vampires, and granting the wishes of the wise person and the kind-hearted person.

I have lost so much power in order to battle the King of Serpents, to consume many diseases, and to save the people I loved.

For God, for people, I have done my utmost.]

If her words were true, was she saying that she would perish as an angel?

Then, she was probably trying to give the astonishing miracle to Auguste with the knowledge of her own destruction.

My instinct wanted me to keep myself away from this self-destructing angel.

But I couldn't move my foot.

[And yet, I was forgotten from the memory of the people.

No one remembers me any longer.

No one will pray to me anymore.

The source of our angelic power is human's faith.

If we lose it, we cannot replenish our diminishing power.

I thought that I would gradually disappear just like that.

After one or two more times someone's wishes come true... otherwise, in just ten years or so, I will be unable to maintain my existence and will disappear.

I intended to accept that destruction—]

Palug cut off her words and stared at the unconscious Auguste.

It was an expression that was filled with compassion but still felt heartrending.

[But there was someone who found this me who had been forgotten... someone who needed me.

It was this child.

That's right, Auguste gave me the meaning to exist again.

He made me, who was as good as dead, feel alive again.

That's why, I will not hesitate to dedicate this body and mind, I am not confused.]

Her words closely resembled Auguste's words.

It was a persistent dedication.

Even if they devoted themselves to the sacrifice, they wished for someone else's happiness.

Even though it was only destruction that was waiting for them both.

"But then, after all, Auguste-sama's wish will not come true in the end. Perhaps, you don't have enough power left to make Auguste-sama's wish come true?"

[Yes, that is correct. Even if I burned all my being in addition to the power of the soul gained from Auguste's blood, at most it could only hold for six years... no, four and a half years, I guess.]

The period during which her existence could be maintained was shorter than that of the original.

Maybe, that was because of her battle with Tirnanog.

I wondered if there was any meaning in that battle that was only further reducing the life of a little child.

“Palug-san, let’s stop. If this continued, both of you would only be unhappy. Wouldn’t it be fine to give up the contract and spend your remaining time with Auguste-sama?”

[Yes, that’s right... I always wanted to do so, if possible. But, Erica-ojouchan, I have already decided. I will use all my remaining power for this child. I will try to grant my precious prince’s wish.]

“Palug-san...”

[Because, the sacrifice to gain power comes closer nonchalantly without knowing anything. There is no need for me to prepare myself for extinction.]

For Palug, Auguste would have been very important.

I had been thinking for some other solution, but I couldn’t think of anything.

...Huh?

Wait a moment, I thought I heard something weird at the end.

“...What sacrifice?”

[Now, I wonder who. Isn’t it the daughter of an alchemist who is smart, pretty, and exceptionally kind?]

Palug opened her mouth halfway, and raised the corner of her mouth.

The smile of a beast, with her fangs exposed.

The more I felt numbness at my fingertips, the more my blood was drained from my face.

I felt my temperature had dropped due to tension and fear.

My too-insensitive-sixth sense was ringing the warning bell at this time to the utmost.

I wondered why I didn't notice.

It was not about uncovering Palug's identity, her thoughts, or that kind of thing.

She was a starving beast searching for power before she was a secretly dying guardian who wanted to give power to the prince, an angel who watched the country, and so on.

It was a death flag.

There was a tremendously stubborn death flag that couldn't be break even with the power of the monster Zaratan.

[Oh, poor you. Trembling like that.

It's alright. I will not extinguish your existence.

Your blood and soul will be transformed into power to fulfil the wish, but you will give me your body.

I will live your life with your body.

How wonderful. Erica Aurelia's body will be married to Auguste.]

The angel spoke words that were unfit of an angel.

It was too shocking and the contents didn't enter the brain properly.

The only thing I could tell was that Palug's plan for the future was impossible for me.

Palug came closer slowly.

I pulled out the Wand of Hold from the wand holder around my waist and shook it with Palug in mind.

The invisible Curse of Petrification, which was a diluted extract from cockatrice, was shot leaving behind a small magical light on the head of the wand.

But Palug's feet wouldn't stop.

Only for a moment, I saw her body flickered like something from an anime battle.

A simple wand attack wouldn't hit her for sure.

Even if I used invisible attacks or light speed attacks, they would be avoided before

they could hit her by using the direction of the wand or my gaze.

[Erica Aurelia. You came to save Auguste, didn't you? Then, nothing is difficult. You only have to help me at the same time.]

Palug smiled bewitchingly and said so while showing off her red nails.

Every time she got closer, I felt that the surrounding's temperature was rising.

I gave a fleeting glance at the exit.

If I could arrive at that point, I could block her access by the Wand of Wall of Stone or Wand of Barbed Wire that created physical barriers.

Of course, since this was Palug, any barriers would be destroyed in an instant.

But, what if there were countless physical barriers rather than only one or two?

In order to exercise the power of destruction, Palug had to cut down her own life.

Thinking about the remaining charges of the wands, it would be a fifty-fifty chance, but if I could set up a large amount of obstacles to lose the pursuit, I might be able to run away.

(But...)

There were two problems in this strategy.

First, my bag was heavier than usual with Tirnanog inside it.

Another one was Auguste who was unconscious in the opposite side of the exit.

Considering the heavy bag, the distance of only 10 meters to the exit felt endlessly far.

But if I ran away using the shortest route, I would have to give up on Auguste.

Nonetheless, it was impossible to think about escaping with the bag containing Tirnanog, or carrying Auguste who was on the other side of Palug.

Even if I abandoned those two people in the first place, it didn't necessarily mean I could run away.

[At the very least, I will end you so that you will not suffer. Goodbye, Erica-ojouchan.]

Palug slowly swung her right hand down.

I could see a condensed flame being emitted from those claws.

This was the light that defeated Tirnanog—was this the identity of the Sword of Flame drawn on the mural?

Something silver flew from behind me just before the tip of the flame touched me.

That flying thing collided with Palug's arm while flying with irregular movements.

There was a loud sound as if heavy metals were clashing with each other.

Her arm was repelled, and the flow of the magical power forming the flame was scattered.

Palug quickly produced short flame nails on her left hand and slashed the object away.

The piece of paper which had a magic circle on it was slashed into two, burned out in a moment, turned into ash and scattered.

That was, perhaps the eastern... Harvan's spell card?

As Palug flew back to Auguste, thousands of spell cards surrounded me as if defending me.

I had seen this spell before.

It was the Protective Circle used by Harvan's mages.

And, I only knew one person who was good at this magic and tended to use the Protective Circle which was supposed to be a defense to attack.

“I will be troubled if you kill this girl without permission. If you want to kill Erica, do it after defeating me.”

A dialogue which somewhat felt like something a rival character would say echoed.

It was Klaus Harvan, the mage of the East, who appeared along with the voice.

クラウス・ハーファン

「そいつを殺したければ、
俺を倒してからにするんだな！」



Chapter 40

Burial Chamber of Angels (6)

Klaus stared at me with a gentle smile that was unlike him.

“Erica, I’m glad I made it here in time.”

He was wearing a black robe above his gray clothes.

There was a magic amplifying effect staff in his hand.

On the first glance, there were lots of spell cards inside of his robe.

“T-thank you very much, Klaus-sama...!”

“You seem fine... , hm?”

Klaus glanced at me and furrowed his eyebrows.

“...That’s right, Erica, you, why are you in a place like this?”

“It’s complicated. More than that, how did Klaus-sama know about this place?”

Pretty sure he was doing a top secret investigation with Eduart-oniisama, right?

And even though the hidden passage was opened, this was the deepest part of the intricate cathedral.

I wondered how did he found this place.

To my question, Klaus glanced at my bag.

“I came pursuing Ann’s emergency Alarm.”

“Alarm... huh.”

I wondered if I brought it with me unintentionally.

No, at that time I didn't put things in or out.

...By some chance, did Ann stuck the Alarm on me?

However, Ann didn't have the chance to touch my bag.

(Aah! I see! When she shook hands with Tirnanog, did she put the magic on his hand!?)

Awesome.

Did she already call for reinforcement at that time, assuming the possibility that Tirnanog and I couldn't do this by ourselves?

Klaus was a skillful person who knocked out the monster Zaratan almost single-handedly.

As a reinforcement that appeared in a situation like this, no one more reliable than him.

"I thought Ann was involved in something dangerous. Because it's about Ann, I need to be quick."

"I-I'm terribly sorry about that."

"When I said that my sister is in danger, that Eduart immediately let me out of the investigation. It was humiliating that the other investigator looked at me as if seeing the same kind... this is bad for my reputation."

Both of them loved their younger sister, I wondered if they understood each other in that aspect.

It might have been fortunate for me that the head investigator was Eduart-oniisama.

Klaus came here because a lot of good fortune and people's kindness were intertwined.

He wouldn't have been on time if the situation was a little different.

I grabbed the hem of Klaus' robe in reflex and stared at him.

"Klaus-sama... I'm really glad you came..."

Something resembling nervousness ran through Klaus' expression for a moment. He turned away curtly with a shaky appearance.

“Hm, thank Eduart for that.”

Oops, if I held the hem, it would be hard for him to fight. I hurriedly let go of Klaus' robe.

“But, I want to avoid fighting monsters while protecting you, and although I want us to escape immediately... Erica, is the unconscious girl over there your acquaintance?”

“Eh, unconscious girl...”

The only one who was unconscious was Auguste, what did he mean by that?

Aah, I see.

Klaus hadn't met Auguste yet, huh.

It seemed that he mistook him as a female because of his long hair and seemingly delicate appearance.

“Yes, that's right.”

“Then we can't abandon her. Especially since she is a friend of my friend.”

Yosh, he misunderstood and now we were going to rescue Auguste.

I didn't say a lie.

I just hid the truth and tricked him.

“Klaus-sama. Let's do our best to help that person!”

“Erica, you still have no sense of danger as ever!”

“Yes, Ann-sama also said that.”

“You don't have such crisis management ability, then why are you stuck in a dangerous situation again... I want to ask questions, but I will do it later. That monster obviously will not wait for us.”

Klaus held up his staff and took out two new spell cards.

On the other side across the Protective Circle, Palug was laughing in delight.

[Well, how lovely. Such a little knight.

I am envious. I also want a cool boy to say '*I will protect you*' to me.

But—]

Palug swung her claws vertically and horizontally.

Cross-shaped scratches were made in the Protective Circle that was set in front of me.

In an instant, the spell cards on that area were destroyed and burned out.

[You are a poisonous sight for my soul, so I will have you disappear.]

Klaus hurriedly launched additional spell cards and strengthened the spell by casting something.

“What’s with this monster...”

“She is a phantom beast, an angel, a lion, and a guardian beast, a man-eating monster who can grant any wishes.”

“What’s with that. Whatever, you can talk about that later”

“Ah, yes.”

“Instead, explain why exactly that the remains resembling the monster Zaratan are wriggling over there.”

The one thing that shouldn’t be exposed the most, got exposed.

What should I do.

I wanted to lie, but it was impossible, so I had to speak honestly.

“Klaus-sama, you said I can do whatever I like with it, right?”

“I thought that you would like to bury it, I didn’t think you would actually unseal it!”

While speaking, Klaus gradually made the Protective Circle thicker.

There were five, six, seven layers... no, eight layers on the thickest part.

“Klaus-sama, wouldn’t it better to turn them into offensive power?”

“Aah, this Protective Circle is strong against mental attack, but has low defense power.”

“Is this a different set of spell cards from before?”

“This one is more than 800 years old. I don’t know why, but if we’re talking about mental attack only, it seems that the old spell cards are stronger.”

As he said, the moving speed of these spell cards were somewhat slower than the ones in the Ruins of Visitor.

Speaking of 800 years ago, that was when vampires were still around.

Perhaps the high mental defense was to protect themselves from magic such as fascination and mind control.

“But, nevertheless, right now wouldn’t the modern ones with high physical defense or thermal protection better?”

“This area is the center of the mental interference that is covering the Kingdom, you know?”

“Ah...”

“Good grief. It’s truly enviable to be insensitive to this kind of attack.”

Speaking of which, due to Auguste’s mental interference, people with low magic defense couldn’t even move, while people with high magic defense wouldn’t get close to the cathedral.

Even if Klaus could come here, he was fine thanks to this old Protective Circle which was superior in mental defense.

“Since that is the case... Erica, unwillingly, I need your power.”

“Yes!”

“I will rely on you to attack. Do you have the wands for that?”

“What about Klaus-sama?”

“I will concentrate on defense. If there is a chance I will also attack, but do not expect too much.”

“Yes.”

I chose the wands while adjusting the angle of the bag so that Tirnanog who was inside couldn't be seen by Klaus.

But, what kind of attack could we do to a monster who knocked Tirnanog down with a single blow?

...No, I couldn't be timid.

Even if she was a formidable enemy that was beyond the standard, I had to at least try to win with all my power.

[Hm~? Are you done? Can I interrupt the eyesore couple soon?]

Palug, who was considerably waiting for us to adjust our postures, said so while stifling a yawn.

At first glance she seemed to be unmotivated, but she had no gap that could be exploited.

When I was bewildered on how to proceed, Klaus advanced a few steps to shield me.

“Sorry for making you wait, monster. I will be your opponent. Bring it on.”

[My, my.

Well, I am impressed by your words.

Since I am being invited by a cool and lovely boy with great trouble, I will have to accept and enjoy myself a plenty.]

As Palug said so slowly, she put strength on her feet in a half-step forward position.

Klaus held his staff up in determination and activated the amplification ability built in the staff.

His staff was not the expensive one like when we went into the Ruins of Visitor, instead it was a mass-produced general staff like those of the mages in the tournament venue. Still, a great mage did not blame his staff, and even if I was an amateur I could feel the overwhelming increase in magical power in him.

As soon as I thought that, the chunk of that magical power was instantaneously scattered.

“Ehh!?”

Klaus' staff was breaking from the middle of its axis.

There was a golden hair-covered hand that was squeezing the staff.

Palug who was in a place more than 10 meters just a moment ago, and was supposedly being blocked by the Protective Circle, suddenly stood between me and Klaus.

Certainly, the spell cards didn't completely cover us.

But, she shouldn't be able to slip through the countless spell cards that were flying around us at high speed.

The humanoid lion laughed innocently.

[Don't do that. Aiming such dangerous things to a girl.]

“Impossible...!”

Klaus had a startled expression but immediately released the crushed staff from his hand and drew out additional spell cards.

A spark of magical power scattered between his hand and the hand of Palug.

Klaus had blocked the red hot claws of Palug with Protective Circle.

The barely cast spell cards became ashes in the hands of Klaus and the other spell cards were scattered all over the floor.

Palug made her other hand to be clad in flames and attacked Klaus with it.

Sparks flickered many times between them like a light.
Each time, several of Klaus' spell cards were destroyed.
If the battle continued like this, the Protective Circle would lose.

I rushed out quicker than they could notice.
The defense was quickly becoming worn out.

I went around to the side of Palug and swung an offensive wand.

From this position, Klaus wouldn't be hit.

Bullets made of pure magical power were fired from the magic circle surrounding the Wand of Magic Missile.

To make them harder to avoid, I aimed at different places and rapid-fired five bullets.
However, Palug dodged them easily without even looking this way.

“Well done!”

I couldn't get a hit on Palug, but the hands that were doing close combat became slightly lax.

It seemed that it was enough for Klaus.

Turning the situation around, Klaus swung his fist that were wrapped in spell cards while Palug was the one on defense.

An especially intense white light burst out from a magic circle.

When the light dimmed, the left hand of Palug which blocked Klaus' fist was covered with thick frost.

The magic of Freeze was suppressing the nails of flame.

Klaus lunged with the same attack.

Palug avoided the attack with a back step.

I was shooting Magic Missiles toward Palug who was trying to get away.

Klaus also sent out the spell cards that were used for defense to attack and caught up with her.

My attack, which was aimed at the moment of unprotected landing, missed due to the fact that Palug didn't come down to the landing point.

She jumped again with Klaus' spell cards which arrived in an instant as her foothold. We aimed toward Palug who was in the air, but they were intercepted and erased by her right claw.

Her bright red dress fluttered as Palug landed elegantly.

[Good grief, even though I don't want to waste my remaining power.]

Palug put power into her right hand.

When flame burst out of her frost-covered left hand, the frost evaporated instantly and disappeared.

It was not a direct damage, but we succeeded in wasting some of her power.

But, how much more could we cut down?

Gradually, I became frustrated.

I was also concerned about the burden of Klaus who had been in a bewildering close combat with Palug.

Right now, he had to feel a lot of burden.

How much of his magical power, which was continuously used to maintain a thick Protective Circle, was remaining?

“Klaus-sama, can you still go on?”

“Aah, this is nothing. You must have one or two trump cards left, right?”

“Yes.”

“We will decide the victory on the next move. Use it. I will give you a little time.”

Saying so, Klaus launched the spell cards with a different magic from the Protective Circle.

BIG EDIT: I changed Edward to Eduart. Actually, since the Prologue, the raw wrote エドアルト (Edoaruto) but at first I thought that was Edward. Recently I thought it over again, but Edward usually written as エドワード (Edowaado) or エドアルド (Edoarudo). And now that we have official illustrations, where it said that his name was エドアルト・アウレリア (Edoaruto Aureria), I feel guilty for not following the raw and took liberty. So I replaced every Edward to Eduart, since while uncommon, that is an actual name. Sorry about that!!! *dogeza*

Chapter 41

Burial Chamber of Angels (7)

Silver sparkling magic circle was wrapping Klaus' spell cards.

It was Harvan's highest tier magic, which created the time delaying barrier that I had seen before.

I understood the intention of Klaus and nodded.

Simple attacks wouldn't hit Palug.

Then, we should create a situation that made them unavoidable.

I held the Wand of Magic Missiles in my right hand, and pulled out another wand with my left hand.

The chosen wand was the Wand of Rain of Stone.

It was as cheap as Magic Missiles, but it contained an offensive magic suitable for group warfare.

When I shook the Wand of Rain of Stone, Palug quickly jumped backward a few meters.

On the place where she was before, countless pieces of small but sharp stone shards were raining incessantly.

It was a range attack that was difficult to avoid for ordinary people, but it didn't seem to work due to the speed of the divine beast.

However, this was within my expectations.

While I shifted the effect range of the Rain of Stone, I continued to rain the stone shards intermittently.

The Wand of Rain of Stone created clouds of stone shards in the air and then descended, so it had a large time lag from its invocation to attack.

On that time lag, I shot the Magic Missiles.

One of the magical bullets that were fired at high speed grazed the arm of Palug.

[This is quite an underhanded attack.]

“As if I would care about my opponent’s situation.”

Physical attacks and magical attacks, low speed bullets from above and fast bullets from the side, Area of Effect and sniping.

Simultaneous attack of two types of magic with different properties.

Without any opening, the hail of bullets pressured Palug and snatched away her option to evade them, and forcing her to defend was a part of my plan.

Palug swept the stone shards away with her fur-covered forearms while just barely avoiding the Magic Missiles.

She wore a smile on her face as usual, but it was not the smile that was full of composure like few moments ago.

[I’m just a dying beast, you know? Please go easy on me a bit more.]

“A wounded beast is the most terrifying one.”

[That’s a pretty high evaluation. I’m glad.]

Without thinking of the consequences, the series of attacks continued to chase after Palug, but at the same time I was being caught up.

The evasion speed of Palug was faster than what I assumed.

It was inevitable that the consumption of the range attack increased since I was trying to cope with her high evasion ability.

Although the Wand of Rain of Stone was charged fifty times, right now the remaining bullets were ten.

(What should I do? I have prepared a spare Wand of Rain of Stone, but... there is no opportunity to pull out the wand.)

If the Rain of Stone stopped even for a moment, Palug would attack within that gap.

However, it was unwise to let go of the Wand of Magic Missile while the remaining

bullets were still being released and to pull out the spare Rain of Stone with my right hand.

It was better than stopping the Rain of Stone, but she definitely could shorten our distance.

And even if I survived right after transferring Magic Missile to my other hand, it would be hard for me to control it with my left hand.

Before I could decide, the rest of the bullets of Rain of Stone had ran out.

I withdrew my second Rain of Stone with my left hand naturally.

I saw the appearance of the approaching divine beast as if weaving her way between the arrows of magical power that I had shot randomly.

Palug brandished her claws—

Claws as sharp as knives stopped right in front of me.

I myself also tangled my legs trying to escape and was stuck in the posture when I was about to collapse on my back.

The stone shards which were falling were stopped mid-air.

The only thing in sight that was moving was the silver spell cards.

(This magic is Klaus'...!)

The silver spell cards which were circling high-speed separated us from the normal time flow.

The magic of Time Delay changed the isolated area into a slow-flowing space like in slow-motion.

By the powerful time manipulation magic which was the closest to stopping time, even the divine beast's movement was constrained without exception.

Klaus who was the caster was the only one who could move normally in this barrier.

Klaus had a spell card in his hand and enclosed it with a complex spell along with his

magical power.

Klaus stuck it on me and it began to emit silver light similar to the time manipulation magic circle.

The feeling like being sewn in the air suddenly disappeared.

Klaus hugged and supported me who was about to fall down.

“T-thank you very much, Klaus-sama.”

“No, I just barely saved you... the magic of Neutralization seems to be working well.”

“Neutralization...? H-huh, I can move?”

While being supported by Klaus, I got up and put strength on my feet.

Since the surrounding time was still delayed, that means the barrier of the Time Delay had not been released.

The spell he put on me seemed to be preventing me from being included in the delayed time stream.

“How ingenious...”

“I did some trial and error ever since *that* battle.”

Klaus said as if it was natural.

I thought it was unfair that he could customize the highest tier magic in just a few months.

“Now then, we don’t have time to relax. Although it seems to be somewhat working, the effect time doesn’t extend much.”

“If we want to attack her, I guess right now is the best time for that.”

I shook the wands of Rain of Stone and Magic Missile toward Palug consecutively.

The countless stone shards created by the magic of Rain of Stone formed a cloud-like mass, and the magic bullets of the Magic Missile was created in front of Palug’s eyes.

However, they were caught by the Time Delay barrier and didn’t move any further.

“It seems that I wasn’t able to neutralize up to the magic you use. It will be a small task for the future... overcoming this seems to be difficult.”

“What should we do now?”

“It’s fine. I will be the one to attack.”

Klaus struck Palug who was suspending in the air by accelerating the spell cards that had create the Protective Circle.

However, the spell cards were ignited and burned out before they could touch Palug.

“Damn it... these spell cards are no good against this monster.”

“What should we do?”

“If I can’t hit that monster using these papers, I only have to hit her using other things. I will borrow the magic you have deployed.”

After saying that, Klaus cast even more magic toward my deployed Rain of Stone.

All of the stone shards were wrapped in a magic that was shining sparkling white.

On the surface of the stone shards, water vapor solidified into frost and then dry ice were formed.

In the aftermath of the magic, it seemed that the temperature of the whole room had fallen.

Apparently, what Klaus cast was a cooling magic.

Certainly, if the opponent was a monster made of light and heat, a cooling magic would be effective.

“Your Rain of Stone and my Cold Snap, the combined magic will be Hail of Stone, huh.”

“You said ‘combined magic’, but I didn’t do anything.”

“Whatever, the caster switched to me anyway. With this, the attack should be able to hit that monster.”

Finally, Klaus added an accelerating spell that was built in the spell cards.

In the Time Delay barrier, the Area of Effect attack became accelerated.

This time it was an unavoidable blow.

Klaus swung his arm with the completion of the chant.

The countless stone hails, due to the acceleration magic, drew a silver trajectory and poured down toward Palug.

After a momentary of fantastic sight, overwhelming destruction took place.

The hails hit the floor and broke it into pieces, and mist containing fragments of stones mixed with debris were whirled up.

The broken stone pieces and mist left Klaus' control again and was suspended in the Time Delay barrier.

The mist containing sparkling debris was covering the battlefield.

The concentration of mist was not enough to completely obscure our field of vision.

And yet, there was no figure of Palug.

“...She disappeared? Where did that monster go?”

“It seems that she is made of light and heat, so maybe she has completely disappeared as she was a while ago.”

“No way. Although it’s a lower tier spell, this is the guy who can erase the spell cards on which a cooling spell was placed without even touching them, you know?”

“But, in the barrier where the time is delayed, she shouldn’t be able to escape... Klaus-sama!?”

The body of Klaus, who was focused on watching our surroundings, suddenly lurched forward.

At the same time, the barrier of Time Delay and the spell cards that were forming the Protective Circle were destroyed at once.

I rushed over to him in a panic.

He didn’t seem to have any trauma.

“Kuh... I see, if it’s the speed of light...”

Following Klaus’ line of sight, I also turned around.

A flash of red light crossed my field of vision.

Palug who materialized in the air, descended on the floor gently.

[Correct. It is so tiring that I didn’t want to use it if possible.

Although I am considerably slowed down, I am light.

From my point of view, the falling pebbles were the same as stopping.

Well, if you completely stopped the time, I supposed they would harm me.]

Strength faded from Klaus’ body.

I couldn’t support him with my power, and Klaus fell on his knees.

“Damn it... , if there were no mental interference, I would still...”

“Klaus-sama!!”

Even though he himself was unconscious, Auguste’s mental interference was still occurring.

Klaus who had lost his Protective Circle was exposed directly to strong mental interference.

Large drops of sweat were forming on his forehead.

While a large amount of magical power was being scraped away, it seemed that due to the Magic Resist he barely endured it.

[Oh my~, you still want to struggle? Those who give up and give in to my prince, will feel relieved, you know?]

“Who... will be doing what you want...! I will not lose... I have decided to become Erica’s shield!”

Even though he was riddled with wounds and was about to faint, Klaus tried to protect me.

Just maintaining his consciousness was already a miracle, so why was he able to do his best?

Palug was overlooking Klaus with a smile.

I felt that the shoulder of Auguste trembled at the edge of my sight.

“...What, you... are you the same as me?”

Unexpectedly Klaus looked away from Palug and looked around.

He was talking towards someone who couldn't be seen in the empty sky.

“Eei, whoever you are, it's fine... , if you can manipulate my body, do it...”

“Klaus-sama, what—!?”

“It's fine even if I become a puppet. In exchange, protect this girl without fail...”

[Oh my, you can't do that.]

Palug punched Klaus' jaw with lightly.

Klaus couldn't even raise his voice and his consciousness was robbed.

There was some pulse.

It seemed that he only fainted.

[I'm sorry. I cannot let Auguste to be burdened with such work.

But, that was very passionate and lovely. I have changed my opinion about that boy.

—That's why I will spare him.

Please be grateful. It's great to be alive... right?]

Palug smiled gently at the fallen Klaus.

The divine beast which had been living as the Hero's attendant, perhaps had seen a glimpse of the future Hero, not only in Auguste but also in Klaus.

[Now then, Erica Aurelia.

You are different. I will not let you go.]

The golden lion called me and stared.

I took a deep breath and raised my eyes.

In just a moment, the facial expression of Palug changed to a very young impression than the appearance suggested.

That smile was a smile of a cruel girl who stamped on insects innocently.

[My life can no longer be kept as long as it is.

Yes... unless I eat your blood, and your soul.

There is no other alternative.

I have to fulfil my contract with Auguste at all cost.]

Step by step, Palug slowly came closer.

I retreated several steps back.

My instinct raised the danger alarm to the limit.

Palug probably could burn us easily if she came at us seriously, now I knew why she didn't.

It was to get an intact sacrifice.

Yes, the dedicated offering for God had to be such a thing.

(Noooooo!! No matter how I think about it, this is progressing toward me being eaten alive!!)

What should I do?

What should I do to escape from this crisis?

Auguste didn't wake up.

Tirnanog was hibernating, there was no sign of moving yet.

Klaus had been knocked down.

Both Otou-sama and Eduart-oniisama were struggling in their roles and didn't even know about this place.

Nobody could help me anymore.

In the first place, in the face of the overwhelming fighting ability of Palug, my warfare was lost.

I didn't give up on my survival, but I couldn't even find a small chance to win.

Against such unreasonable beast, humans just couldn't win.

(—*if there is nothing like that, people cannot overcome such beast.*)

Suddenly, I recalled my conversation with Auguste in my mind.

Inside my thoughts that were dyed in deep black with despair, there was a shiny light of hope.

(—*this beast was cursed by God, and it seems that it had no choice but to accept it if a riddle match was set up.*)

No way.

There was no doubt, if the fragments of the folklore were all true.

Finally found a small hope, I decided to take a risk.

“Palug-san! Please listen!”

[Ufufufufu, are you pleading for your life? It's regretful, but the situation where we could talk with each other has long passed.]

Forcibly turning the gear inside my brain that did not turn due to fear and confusion, I recalled one question that was suitable for Palug.

“It, it walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening, what is it!?”

Chapter 42

Burial Chamber of Angels (8)

“...”

[...]

“...W-what is it~?”

[...]

The silence was very awkward.

In addition, it was difficult to read the expression of Palug whose smile disappeared, it was hard to circle around it.

Please give some reaction.

Why did I say such a thing, I was embarrassed about my self-satisfied look.

No, it was fine even if it was embarrassing.

I decided to settle this not with battle but with wisdom, it was my last ray of hope.

If this was a wrong information, my survival after this was in danger.

After all, it was a straight line towards me being eaten alive.

[Ufuh.]

Unexpectedly, there was a strange voice coming out of Palug.

Gradually, her face was twitching and finally her face broke into a smile as if to say she couldn't hold it back anymore.

[Ufu, ufufufu. Why do you know about it?

Oh no, ufufufu. That was a secret between my King and I~.

Eh~, hundreds of years have passed, how did you find out?

Ufufuh, aah~, how embarrassing~.]

Palug covered her face, looking over here from between the gap of her fingers, her tail was swishing back and forth as if troubled.

You looked like you were having fun, Divine Beast-san.

Where was the serious person just a few moments ago?

Ah, no, if that serious person was busy, she didn't have to force herself to come back.

This person who advance to the gag route by her own will should increase my survival rate.

Anyway, was it really fine to win by a riddle match?

I was supposed to cornered and was about to die, I wondered if this person loves telling a riddle so much.

[I can't believe it, there is someone who challenges me to a riddle match in this era!

Prepared yourself, daughter of an alchemist.

Here is the match that will decide your fate. This is the beginning of hardships beyond imagination.

Once the match starts, not even God can stop it. If you want to withdraw, this is your last chance, you know?]

"I am the one who challenge you, and I will not run away now! Bring it on, Messenger of God!"

There was no way I would withdraw, I miraculously succeeded in saving myself from being eaten alive by a cat.

Whether it was a tough match or not, it was better than sitting around and waiting for my death.

[Aah! The annoying Curse from my God!

I cannot escape from this constraint that was granted to me by my God who dotes on the diminutive human beings.

I cannot help it, I really don't want it, I really, *really* don't want it!

But alas, I have to accept this riddle match.]

Palug was exageratingly lamenting in a tone of voice as if acting on a play, as she hugged herself in anguish.

No matter how I looked at this angel, she was in high spirits.

[If this is a normal match, it will be my complete victory.

Then it will be boring and become a breach of contract with my God.

So, I will give you, who is just a human being, a chance to win.

If I made a mistake even once, it will be my defeat. You lose when you made three mistakes.]

Palug thrust three fingers before me as she said that.

She seemed to give me a handicap.

In this case, let's get as much as I can get.

“I understand. I guess I can make two mistakes, right?”

[Yes, furthermore, every time you made a mistake, you will give me one third ownership of your body.]

“Um... Palug-san, human beings will die if you pluck one third of their body.”

[Wait... don't say such scary things. I'll only mark you a little bit.]

“Mark?”

[Don't worry. I will return it to normal if you win.]

I said that word many times without voicing it while nodding in agreement.

What did she mean by ‘mark’?

I became uneasy, I wondered if she really could return it to normal.

[Then, I will answer you.

Walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening...

An infant walks with their limbs, an adult walks with two feet for a long time, an old man who walks with a stick.

In other words, the answer is human?]

“...Correct.”

The first question was easily answered.

Perhaps in the southern continent, there was the famous riddle of Sphinx that was said in my previous world?

There was no use in regretting, let's think positively.

Because I thought of that riddle, I pulled myself into this advantageous situation, this was the most satisfactory outcome.

It was unexpected that the riddle was solved easily, but I succeeded in earning myself time.

I was barely keeping myself from thinking negatively.

In contrast, Palug was so pleased with herself that she spontaneously jumping up and down.

[I did it~~! Yay~!

As expected of me! I'm so smart!

Now then~, this time it's my turn to ask, okay?]

Palug assumed a mysterious pose that looked like some kind of martial art, somehow she seemed very excited as she was saying that.

Unlike her appearance, she was as childish as a little child.

By the way, until this monster was found by Auguste, she had been living for a long time.

[He dies every night and revives every morning.

He runs all the way in a day and he will not stop walking no matter how tired he is.

Who is he?]

Incomprehensible words came suddenly.

Died and revived every night, was it a zombie?

Or, was it a magical beast or a phantom beast of some continent that I didn't know?

No, there wouldn't be such a problem like that.

Palug said that it would breach the contract with God if it didn't favor human beings.

So, problems that human beings could never solve should also be a breach of contract.

Something that disappeared every evening, and revived as the sun rises.

Shadow?

But shadows didn't walk thousands of miles.

Was there anything else that linked to sunrise and sunset?

No, wait.

Rather than being linked—

“Sets in the evening, rises in the morning, and from our standpoint, this star goes around us—the answer is the sun!”

[Ufufufufu, correct. Perhaps that was too easy?]

“No, it was very difficult.”

[My, my, how splendid. Next time, let me give you a problem that you cannot afford to be humble, okay?]

Palug answered with a large smile.

Oh no, should I have pretended to struggle a bit?

[But before that, Erica Aurelia, it's time for you to ask.]

As if she couldn't wait, Palug was beckoning me to start.

Well, what kind of riddle should I make?

Since I didn't particularly like riddles, I hadn't prepared anything.

Palug seemed to really love riddles.

She would have already covered the basic riddles of this world.

Then, now was the time for my so-called modern knowledge cheat.

Even a common riddle in my previous world would be a riddle that nobody knew in this world.

After hesitating for a while, I asked Palug.

I chose a simple problem that even children in my previous world would know.

“A big flood on the top, a big fire at the bottom, what is it?”

A smile appeared at the mouth of Palug.

It seemed that a riddle that didn't exist in this world had drawn the interest of the divine beast.

Yosh, if she is thinking about it carefully as she is, I can spend the time to think about the next riddle, I was thinking about silly things.

[Hmm~, to say a big flood, if it's a pot, it is an exaggeration.

The submarine volcano should not be known yet by people.

Oh, I remember. Long ago, I have seen it on the southern continent.

—The answer is a bath.

You have an extensive knowledge, daughter of an alchemist. However, unfortunately my knowledge seems to have surpassed yours.]

“Uu... that's correct.”

In the meantime, my modern knowledge cheat had been defeated.

No, rather, it was not even a cheat if it got insta-killed.

It was just modern knowledge.

If I thought about it carefully, it might be good that there was a bath in this world as well.

Without it, the problem would fail.

It made me shiver when I thought that the penalty for cheating was made with the sensibility of a monster.

I secretly thanked the ancient technology in my mind.

Without knowing my internal conflict, Palug cheerfully pointed at me with an exaggerating gesture.

[Well then, now it's my turn!

It is sometimes a serious illness leading to death.

No matter how powerful their magic was, no doctor can heal it.

But this disease will make people and beasts happy.

Is this problem too easy for little girls?]

What should I do, I didn't understand it at all.

Was it not 'despair', if we were talking about deadly disease?

But it was uncertain whether 'despair' made people and beasts happy.

Besides, 'easy for little girls'?

It became more and more mismatched with the answer 'despair'.

This was troubling...

No matter how many times I thought about it, my thoughts returned to 'answer: despair'.

My modern knowledge was interfering with my ability to solve this riddle.

Eventually, I couldn't think of any other answer after going around in circles.

This was not good, well, it was better than not answering at all.

I opened my mouth after thinking so.

“...Despair?”

[Oh my~, you finally made a mistake! Too bad!

The answer is ‘love’.

I thought it was too easy~]

Palug expressed her joy exaggeratedly.

However, her face suddenly became clouded.

[Hm? Wait a minute, ‘despair’? Huh? Why did such an answer come out?]

“Eh... , is ‘love’ something you can be happy with?”

[Eh...?]

“While I am happy if I see people falling in love in a fiction—a drama...”

Palug widened her eyes, her mouth was half-way opened, and with an expression that looked like a goldfish.

She took several steps back with that expression.

Eh? By any chance, did Palug move away from me?

“Can falling in love really makes you happy? It seems to be troublesome, and it will be painful if the other person didn’t love you back, right?”

Palug stepped even further away.

Somehow she had an expression as if seeing a pitiful child.

[I do not deny that there is such a dark side.

It is because the decease of loved ones could also lead people to death.

But, nevertheless, don't you feel happy when you fall in love?

Look, what I'm trying to say is, that your heart would tighten with a 'kyuuun~' when you were around that person, and when you thought about them, you became excited. Since I was born, I have fallen in love about thousands of times, but I was happy each time.]

“...!”

It was in four digits number, what amazing love affairs.

I would be happy if it was in a game, manga, or novel, but my real experiences with love were all unpleasant.

I was seriously scared of love.

Most of all, the feeling of refusal was terrible because I had been caught up in such feelings by other people.

[...I wonder if you are too young to talk about love... you are not even a ten years old.

But, what do you mean?

To feel that 'despair' is a happy thing, just what the heck happened... what kind of life are you living even though you are not even a ten years old?]

No, I didn't think 'despair' was a happy thing, but I couldn't think of anything else.

I tried to correct her, but when I heard the following words, I withdrew the words that had come up to the tip of my tongue.

[...This is my mistake in making the question. I will think of an alternative problem.]

Somehow I got through it and even got an advantage.

However, I appreciated Palug's condolences.

[Cannot do anything, but can do anything.

Does not help with anything, but more precious than anything else.

The existence itself is a blessing, bringing salvation and happiness to those in contact. However, not everyone wants it.

Who is it?]

I examined the second problem of Palug.

This time I only thought about it a little and quickly arrived at the answer.

The scripture stated that He was omniscient and a supreme being.

But, in reality He did not do anything.

The existence Himself was said to be a blessing, bringing salvation and happiness.

But the choice of whether to believe or not was left to each person.

The answer was surely 'God'.

It was a problem that seemed to match perfectly with 'God'.

"The answer is God, isn't it?"

Palug made a face.

[Sorry.

That was pretty good, but it's not the answer.

If it is God, He will help people even just a little.

The correct answer of this riddle, is a baby.]

"Uh...!"

This was bad.

Because there was a God's messenger, God had to exist.

If even one of the miracles conveyed in the folklores or scripture was true, it would not match the condition that 'cannot do anything' and 'does not help with anything'.

Besides, 'baby' was a perfect match for these conditions.

[Ufufufu. You finally made a mistake. Then, as promised, I will get one third of your body.]

“W-wait a minute.”

[Nope~. Because I have been kept waiting for a while.]

The arm of Palug lit up in light crimson.

It was lighter than the nails of flame, but I couldn't feel at ease even by saying that.

She brandished her lit up arm and aimed it at me.

Due to the bright light, I closed my eyes.

[Yep, nice work.]

After a while, with the pleased sound of Palug as the signal, I opened my eyes.

There was no pain.

It seemed that I was not broken, gouged, scratched, nor bitten.

(That's good, I'm not being eaten yet... truly, I don't want to be eaten alive!)

Just to be sure, I touched all over my body and checked.

Yup, I was fine.

I had all my fingers and my legs, there was no place that I couldn't move.

There was nothing bleeding.

I could feel both eyes, my nose, and my ears too—

—*fluff*.

(Eh? 'Fluff'...?)

As I was touching my head, I realized there was something out of place.

Something was attached on somewhat above the place where my ears should have been originally.

I hurriedly took out a small hand mirror from my bag.

Nothing was lost.

However, there were extra things added.

They were in a golden color similar to that of Palug in front of me.

However, mine were in a sharp triangle shape while Palug's were a round lion-type.

On my head, they moved with a twitch.

There were cat ears growing on top of my head.

Chapter 43

Burial Chamber of Angels (9)

To say that they were ears, they were too fluffy for that.

They felt soft to the touch and triangle-shaped.

They were certainly cat ears.

They were cat ears that were elaborately made.

In other words, they looked like the real cat ears themselves.

They felt warm when I touched it, which meant that blood was flowing.

When I noticed that the pulse was linked with me, once again I realized the seriousness of this situation.

If they didn't return to normal, even if I didn't die physically, I would die socially.

In the meantime, my heart would also die.

Actually, my eyes that was reflected in the hand mirror went beyond dead like fish eyes, and more like dried fish eyes.

[You look ve~ry cute and they suit you well.

If you win, I will restore you to normal, although if you like it you can stay in that appearance, you know~?]

Palug was smiling like a Cheshire cat.

As for me, I would like to respectfully decline.

I wanted to argue, but I still hadn't recovered from the shock, and the words that I wanted to say were not assembled properly.

...I kept my emotions low and kept my eyes on objectivity, but I might reach my limit

soon.

There was no such thing!

It wasn't like that!

Even though my life was barely hanging on a thread, why would you strike me with shame!

[Now, now, it's not the time to be fascinated with your own lovely figure.

If you aren't willing to ask the next question, you can accept your loss as it is, you know?]

Feeling ashamed regarding the cat ears and feeling terror regarding physical erosion. To me who was confused by the two emotions, Palug mercilessly demand me to continue the match.

I had to think about what question to ask next with a confused head.

Neck that came out of the mouth was a yawn¹.

Bread that couldn't be eaten was a frying pan².

The one that hit the raccoon's shoulder was a persimmon³.

This was a bad miscalculation.

The riddles that I had heard in my previous life was mostly language-dependent, and it didn't make any sense when I translated them into this world's language.

Right now, it was not good to recycle the Japanese riddles.

It would only butcher the words that was quoted from the original language and they would not even become a riddle.

It was inevitable.

I only had to overcome this problem by myself on this one occasion and passed through this.

Rather than the usual puns, by turning the gears inside my brain, somehow I

succeeded in creating one riddle.

“It is both a cradle and a graveyard. It is both soft and hard. A sun that sleeps in a small sea. What is this?”

Palug giggled as she heard my childish riddle.

[Oh my, is it fine to ask such an easy question?

It is a soft cradle for a growing life.

However, for those who cannot break the hard shell, it is a graveyard.

In the transparent white sea, it is packed with golden yellow yolk similar to the sun.

That is... an egg, right?]

“...Correct.”

I tried hard but I couldn’t even buy myself time.

And now the questioning right shifted to Palug.

If I made two more mistakes, I would be devoured by Palug this time.

In other words, I only had a room to make one mistake.

However, when I thought that I would be forced to get something equivalent to the cat ears, I didn’t want to make a mistake again.

[Now then, daughter of an alchemist. I will ask you again.

It is greedier than any beast.

It cannot help but eat what it touches.

However, it disappears once it stops eating.

It is tamed by people, but sometimes it turns its fangs toward its owner, eating and killing them.

What is the name of this thing?]

About the riddle of Palug, I first thought of dogs, cats, and other demons.

‘Eating people’ usually associated with large carnivores.

But, was it such a simple thing?

In particular, I didn’t understand about ‘it disappears once it stops eating’.

It didn’t die, it disappeared.

Was there no corpse remained?

Ah, maybe—

“The answer is ‘disease’. Both animals and plants, all living beings can be affected by some disease. Moreover, after it causes death the disease itself will be gone.”

[Ufufufu, I see. So that’s what you came up with.]

I gently stroked my chest in relief.

However, looking at my relieved state, the facial expression of Palug turned into a mean smile.

[But, that’s incorrect. Disease does not eat anything other than life, and people don’t tame them.

The answer is fire.

Fire tries to burn everything it touches.

If inflammable material disappears from its surroundings, fire cannot exist.

Humans learned how to manipulate fire freely as theirs.

However, too much fire will destroy the humans themselves who tried to manipulate it.]

Aah, this was bad.

I thought that it was a living thing by the word ‘eat’.

Certainly, because this was a riddle, the word ‘eat’ could be a metaphor.

[Now then... now two thirds of your body is mine. Are you prepared, Erica Aurelia?]

Palug brandished her right hand with a flowing movement.

The lit up nails were the same color as my cat ears.

I drew back reflexively and covered my face with both hands.

Such efforts were also useless, the claws of Palug went through my defense and touched me.

(This... this is...!?)

I felt something moving inside my clothes.

Something as smooth as velvet was touching my skin.

Because it was blocked by my clothes, the inside of my skirt felt cramped.

Considering the length and shape that was touching my skin, it felt like a tail.

I moved it and stretched it out of the way.

I felt fear that such a thing that suddenly grew could be moved at will.

With such steady preparation, Palug was ready to rob my body.

[Good grief, unexpectedly there is no response for that. The next question has to pack more punch, or else I won't tolerate it.]

In contrast to her words, Palug grinned and showed her sharp fangs.

It was the smile of a beast who was asserting her own superiority.

How vexing.

I couldn't afford to make another mistake.

Then, what should I do?

I couldn't win with a frontal attack.

Even in the riddle match I was driven into the corner.

I was inferior to Palug, both in power and wisdom.

But, was it truly a checkmate?

For me who was still a normal human being, there was a means to counter monsters who had knowledge beyond that of a human.

If the monster in the folklore was defeated, how did the weak humans defeat the monster?

For example, putting them to sleep by drinking alcohol.

For example, flattering them and fooling them into taking the form of a small weak creature.

For example, fooling them into trusting you, and dug information about their weaknesses and their True Name.

Each one of those were not fair, they involved cheating and cowardly means.

Would it be impossible to win the riddle match with Palug unless I cheated or used cowardly means?

But, with a simple foul, it would be my immediate death when it was seen through.

What I needed was a foul that could attract the interest of Palug and got her hooked.

Something that Palug had a strong interest and emotional attachment to.

I only knew one such a thing.

“...Prince Auguste.”

I started off with those words.

In response to that word, Palug’s ears snapped up in attention.

Her face still maintained that calm smile.

But the fact that she kept smiling, without saying anything, was evidence that she was listening carefully to this topic.

I continued the question while watching Palug's reaction.

"Who is Prince Auguste's most important person?"

I didn't know the answer.

No, the real answer of Auguste was unknown.

Surely, since we were talking about Auguste, if I asked the person himself, he would dodge the question.

But, in this case it was convenient because no one knew the answer.

Unless the person himself denied it, if I said 'his father' or 'his mother' it would be a likely answer.

For example, if Palug answered 'his mother' then I would say it was 'his father', and if she answered 'his father' then I would say 'his mother' was the correct answer.

If she said 'his parents'... then I would say that 'his siblings' was the correct answer.

By preparing multiple correct answers, I could make the answer different from whatever Palug would say.

This was the method I came up with after thinking it over.

"Now, answer it. It should have been easy since you stayed with Auguste for a long time, right?"

In order to drive her into my trap, I provoked Palug to rush her.

Palug who was questioned cast her eyes downward for a while, but she immediately raised her face.

She exposed her sharp fangs and had a terrifying smile on her face.

My heart beat faster.

Although she had a smile on her face, I felt like she was mad enough that the time when I was fighting with Zaratan cannot be compared with what she felt right now.

[Ooh, how annoying... unexpectedly, you asked me that.]

“U-um, Palug-san...?”

[Yes, of course I know. Even I know that. I have been with him for a long time, so how can I not notice?]

Palug stared at me with a smile on her mouth, but her eyes were burning with hatred. I didn't know what went wrong.

But, it seemed that I definitely had stepped over the landmines of Palug.

[How vexing! To think that I have to spit such words!

The answer is you, the daughter of an alchemist of the West, Erica Aurelia!

In such a short time, you filled the prince's loneliness, snatched away his heart and left!]

“Eh...?”

For a moment, I didn't know why Palug said my name.

As I understood the meaning gradually, surprise spread in my heart.

No, there was no way that was the truth.

I wondered how I could become the most important person even though we only had met for a few days.

Even if that was what Palug thought, it might be rude to Auguste.

But, if by any chance Auguste held romantic emotions towards me, I couldn't use the answers I had prepared.

On the contrary, my reaction might have exposed the foul play itself.

[Oh? Perhaps you didn't know?

Even though you didn't know the answer, you asked me such a thing?

You made a riddle for me that you don't even know the answer for?

—You committed a wrongdoing, daughter of an alchemist!]

A cry similar to the roaring of a lion echoed throughout the room.

The light of the patterns engraved on the wall turned into dark red and began to heat up as if burning.

Not only her nails, all of her arms were wrapped in flames, as if in response to Palug's anger.

[How dare you, to defile the sacred contract ritual with an unfair riddle.

You are now a filthy offering.

I cannot afford to eat you.

Now that I can't eat you, I'll kill you, and in the short time that I have left, I will go around eating every human with power that I can get hold of in this Royal Capital.

There would probably no one more suitable for the offering than you, but it might be able to maintain the fusion with Auguste for several years.

Everything is for this child's wish... for my last wish!]

Intense heat stroked my skin.

Due to the intense heat contained in the air, my throat seemed to burn.

I looked at Klaus, Tirnanog, and Auguste.

Klaus might be eaten as an offering.

Or perhaps he might be spared as Palug had promised.

But, Klaus' family, Ann and the Duchess of Harvan might suffer.

Palug was extremely opposed to Tirnanog.

Palug wouldn't keep the black dragon alive.

Or, Tirnanog who possessed a strong sense of duty might challenge her to a reckless fight in revenge.

As long as Auguste fused with Palug, the loss of his riding ability was inevitable.

He would endeavour to leave the royal family in order not to disturb his brother's succession to the throne in the ending of his individual route.

His family would lose him.

Not only that.

It would be the duty of Auguste, who had lost his memory about her, to give the final blow against Palug who had lost her sanity.

That tragedy occurred under the circumstances that both of them didn't remember each other.

But, as I had known about that, I couldn't let them to bear such fate.

Regret filled my heart.

If this was the case, it would have been better to just lose the match and being eaten by Palug.

Then, perhaps at least Palug's mind would be saved.

A glowing claw drew near me.

I decided my resolution and closed my eyes, just before the unavoidable death.

[Guh!?]

Palug let out a groan.

Through my closed eyelids, I could feel the blazing nails of flame approaching my eyes.

But the nails didn't attack me at all.

(What does it mean? There's no way that Palug who was so angry suddenly decide to forgive me.)

When I opened my eyes, there was a flame-covered right arm of Palug in front of me. Her right arm stopped right at the moment she was about to swing it down.

Klaus' work?

I thought so, but Klaus was still on the floor.

The spell cards were not deployed either.

Palug seemed to be able to move except for her arm, and I also could move without the magic of Neutralization.

This was not due to the Time Delay barrier.

Then, why?

When I looked around, my eyes met with that person.

“Wait please, Palug. You do not have the right to kill Erica.”

[Uh... no way... , h-how...?]

Auguste stood up, with his palm facing us.

Sweat drenched his forehead, and he had a complexion that made it seem he was likely to collapse even now.

I understood now.

Auguste used all of his mental interference ability and stopped the movement of Palug.

Of course, that was not the original usage.

Surely, his body and spirit were terribly burdened.

Palug was frightened as if she was a little child whose wickedness was seen, and she extinguished the flames that was burning on both of her arms.

At the same time, she firmly put away her killing intent which she had let out plainly.

Auguste approached Palug step by step while enduring pain.

With a gentle smile as if he knew everything, he said:

“You, the answer to that problem... you don’t know about the most important person for me.”

¹ Neck is くび (kubi), while yawn is あくび (akubi). So, a neck (kubi) that comes out of the mouth is a yawn (akubi).

² Bread is パン (pan), while frying pan is フライパン (furaipan). So a bread (pan) that cannot be eaten is a frying pan (furaipan).

³ Raccoon is たぬき (tanuki), hitting the shoulder is 肩たたき (katataki), while persimmon is 柿 (kaki). In this case, you have to read the ‘tanuki’ as [ta] nuki, which means without ‘ta’. So the whole riddle roughly becomes: What hits the shoulder (katataki) without ‘ta’? The answer is persimmon (kaki).

Chapter 44

Burial Chamber of Angels (10)

Confirming that Palug had lost her intention to fight, Auguste seemed to have released the mental interference ability.

At the same time with Palug's stiff body loosened, Auguste's body tilted forward.

Palug caught Auguste's falling body gently.

[Auguste!

Why did you do such a reckless thing!

Because you shared the power of your soul with me, normally you shouldn't be able to move until the completion of the contract!]

"Aah, I was sound asleep. But... there's no way I can sleep with such a loud voice nagged at me."

Auguste glanced at Klaus who had fallen asleep.

I see, so Auguste was the opponent of the conversation just before Klaus fainted, huh

"If you can't move, I will lend you my body. So you can protect Erica in my stead. I don't mind losing my life'... that's what he said, so there's no way I can sit still and do nothing."

[Auguste...]

"Because of his aid, I heard everything from the mid part, and managed to put everything together"

Indeed, that was something Klaus would say.

Auguste rose to his feet while staggering.

"I'm sorry, Erica. I have let you encountered danger. I never thought you would follow me to a place like this."

"No, because I did it on my own volition."

"Still, thank you for stopping me. Somehow, I managed to stop before I could make the worst mistake."

Auguste smiled softly.

Fatigue was shown through that facial expression, but he seemed to be somewhat cheerful.

Auguste refused support and stood in a place away from me and Palug.

Our position was exactly like an equilateral triangle if you connected the three of us.

Because of his attitude, I felt that he insisted on a neutral position that would not favour either me nor Palug.

"The question just before, it should not count as cheating if I told you the correct answer. Palug, was there such a precedent as well?"

To the question of Auguste, Palug quietly nodded.

As for Palug, as if her belligerent attitude some time ago was a lie, she had become totally meek.

She seemed like a prisoner waiting for her conviction.

"Who is the most important to me... wasn't it. Answer it once more, Palug."

After hesitating for a while, she told us the answer once again.

[The most important person to you—

It is the girl who came from a distant land.

It is the girl who healed your loneliness.

She entered your heart in a fraction of a moment.

And then, she has become an indispensable person for you.]

“Aah, that’s right.”

[She is a descendant of an alchemist who came from a distant sea.

A girl with beautiful, transient golden hair and eyes the color of the sea.

The name of the one you love is Erica Aurelia—right?]

Auguste laughed as if troubled and slowly shook his head.

“Palug, that’s a mistake.”

[You cannot fool me, Auguste.

Who do you want from the bottom of your heart?]

“That is probably a feeling that is not yet love or romantic love.

Yes, for example, it is the feeling when a child who was walking in the darkness without light for a while, looked up at the night sky.

He found the glow of a single star in the dark night sky.

Even though he couldn’t reach it, he thought that he wanted that star – it is that kind of story”

Auguste looked up at the ceiling and gestured as if reaching the invisible star.

With that words, I felt a little relieved.

Maybe, I was still afraid that I would get involved in such matters.

“This feeling is more of a childish desire.

So, speaking of important things, she is important, but Erica is not yet my most important person.”

Auguste lowered his eyes and looked at Palug.

Palug looked back at him while still looking unconvinced.

“She came from a distant land and healed my loneliness. She entered my heart in a short amount of time and became indispensable for me. That is correct.”

[Then, who do you mean? I have been with you forever, but there is no such woman!]

“There is. You cannot tell other people.”

Auguste smiled the same smile as the day when we first met and pointed his index finger to Palug.

“My most important person, that is, Palug... it’s you.”

I see, Palug was a friend of Auguste.

It was no wonder that she was the most important person.

Palug went several steps backward with a startled expression.

As tears gradually gathered in her eyes, her face turned red.

I understood well that anger and various other emotions were overflowing from the facial expression of Palug.

[W-what are you saying?

Saying something appropriate like that, you only said that to deceive me.

I will not be deceived.

No matter how much you want to help Erica, such a foul play is not allowed in the contract ritual.]

Auguste shook his head, looked at Palug in the eyes and answered.

“Palug, you have been by my side forever.

When the legitimacy of my blood was suspected and I couldn’t talk with my mother properly, you cuddled me all the time in exchange for my mother.

Even when I was isolated due to the irresponsible slanders or rumors, you were by my side."

[Auguste... Such a thing...]

"I could walk to the place where the stars could be seen, it was because I wasn't alone. Because the warmth of your hands were pulling my hand. Otherwise, I would have just been crouching in the darkness without light. —I have answered you like this, are you still not convinced?"

Palug slumped onto her knees after hearing Auguste's words.

The nails of flame that had been lit up for a long time were also retracted indefinitely.

[I would be fine with losing this life if it is for you.
No, I would rather have used this life for you.]

"I do not want to fly in the sky if I have to sacrifice you.
I would not make a wish if I knew that the cost of a miracle would be your life.
If I sacrificed you without knowing, I'm sure I wouldn't be able to forgive myself."

Palug smiled a lonely smile on those words.

[...Such a kind prince.
I didn't want to tell you that the time I have left was short.
In this way, you have given up your dream, your wish.]

"No. It is you who are kind."

Auguste walked over to Palug and held her fur-covered hands.

Palug raised her face and stared at Auguste.

Auguste smiled somewhat apologetically.

“There are things I have to apologize to you about.

I always thought that you are too kind and that you kept on telling me white lies.

Because of that, I couldn’t believe in myself... that you only said such things to me because of my heritage and ran away.

That’s not it, I was scared.

Perhaps, the blood of my father really doesn’t flow within me. I do not have the talent to ride a dragon.”

[Auguste...]

“But, now it’s different.

Next time I will also believe in myself with all my heart, because you have always believed in me.

Even if everything you said is a lie, I will turn them into a reality.

I will not make you a liar.”

Palug hugged Auguste and buried her face in his shoulder.

Although I couldn’t see her expression, her shoulders were trembling and I heard a small groan similar to a sob.

Auguste stroked Palug’s head gently.

“I promise, Palug.

I will overcome my weak self and this time I will reach that sky with my own power.”

After a while, Palug raised her face and drew back from Auguste.

She looked somewhat cheerful, so I didn’t know whether she was crying or not.

Palug sighed deeply and looked at Auguste.

[Good grief, what a selfish prince... even though you are the one who asked me to do

this, you are the worst.]

“Sorry, sorry.”

In contrast to her words, Palug’s tone was gentle.

I felt relieved to see that.

[Hey, Auguste. I have something to apologize to you too.]

“It’s fine, you don’t have to tell me. I will forgive everything.”

[I haven’t told you something about the contract. If I am to have a new Lord through a re-contract, memories about me will disappear from the people who has been involved with me.]

“...What did you say!?”

“W-wait, Palug-san!”

I just didn’t want to die, I didn’t want to wish for a miracle.

I didn’t intend to take her away from Auguste.

Before we could stop her, Palug declared loudly:

[I, Angel Pestilence, admit my defeat to the wise human.

With this, Lady Erica Aurelia will be my Master.

I swear to my God that I will grant her wish with all my power.]

Along with those words, the color of the light on the wall that decorated the room changed

From blood red to sunshine gold.

Like golden petals, particles of light were slowly falling down from the ceiling.

[Goodbye, Auguste. May your life after this be full of light.]

Palug said so and kissed Auguste’s forehead.

At the same time, Auguste's eyelids dropped heavily and his body tilted forward.

"Wait, Palug, I'm still... you..."

Auguste reached for Palug, but his hand immediately dropped.

After catching the falling Auguste, Palug gently laid his body on the floor.

The particles of the falling light penetrated into the unconscious body of Auguste and Klaus.

Particles of light came close to the bag containing Tirnanog, but it seemed that it was being repelled by some mysterious power.

[Oya, it doesn't work for that serpent, huh. I see, it seems that Aurelia really refuses the power of my God.]

"Wait a minute, what are those lights?"

[Didn't I say it? Because of the restrictions of my God, things concerning me are erased from the memory of those who know me.]

"There is no need to do so, please do not erase Auguste's memory."

Palug shook her head while smiling with a mixed expression.

[This is what God had set, so I cannot do anything about it.

Just as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, or that water flows down from a higher place.

There is no one who can escape from this forced oblivion, except for you Aurelias who apparently seem to be outside of my God's principle.

The only thing I can do is to slightly modify this phenomenon, by leaving only a small part for the basis of the folklore.]

"Palug-san... you, you have been forgotten by people for a long time, haven't you?"

The lore of Angel Pestilence was fragmented and was differentiated as the stories of multiple monstro.

The reason for that was this oblivion principle.

There was probably a lot of events in those contracts that weren't shown in the folklore.

How many encounters and farewells had she repeatedly have ever since she descended to this world?

Palug smiled at me with a gentle expression.

It was as if she wasn't suffering from loneliness.

It felt like she was an angel for sure.

[Do not make such a sad face.

Even if everyone forgets me, I remember everything.

Only my loving memories that have been with me all this time.

I was always happy.

In addition... you are Aurelia who refuses God's principle.

Even if the last oblivion principle works, you will remember me, won't you?]

“Perhaps, you deliberately lost to me, didn't you?”

She didn't want to betray Auguste's feelings, but she also didn't want to break her contract with God.

And there were only few ways to keep Auguste from carrying such a heavy burden.

Through being knocked down by someone, or through a re-contract.

She was able to kill us at any time, but she postponed it with various reasons.

Perhaps she thought that she wanted someone to stop her.

[Well, who knows~?]

Palug said jokingly while turning her back towards me.

As if gently refusing to answer further questions.

In the end, the truth remained unknown.

[So? Erica Aurelia, what do you want?

Unfortunately, even if I am an angel, I am almost like a wreckage.

So you cannot wish for eternal life, ultimate beauty, or enormous wealth.

It will certainly be the last wish that I can grant, so if you can, I want you to wish something that is worthy of me risking my life over.]

While turning back, Palug asked me.

Even if she said so, I didn't think I had a wish that I wanted to realize.

Maybe to return the cat ears and tail to normal?

No, no, that was set in the stone, so I didn't need to wish for it.

After thinking for a while, I suddenly think of something.

“Palug-san, what do you wish for?”

[Ha...?]

Palug faltered and looked at me stupidly.

It was unthinkable to extort a miracle from a dying angel.

Since that was the case, there was only one thing I should do.

It should be fine to pitch in and help my precious friend and this depressed friend.

“Hey, Palug-san the Dying Angel, I will give you a miracle.

You can wish for the miracle you want.

Whether it's for your own life extension, or even for Auguste, it's fine.

This is what I want you to do the most right now.

I wonder if such a wish can be granted?"

[You... you don't want to use it for yourself, are you stupid?

It's a *real miracle*.

Anyone would kill for this, you know?

Even though I'm just a wreckage of an angel, the miracle that I could grant cannot be measured by ordinary humans, you know?

You must have one or two wishes, right!?]

"No, not really."

Sorry, but I already received enough miracles.

After reincarnating, I had a sufficiently happy life—an affectionate family and good friends with a non-human mixed in, my life was complete and I couldn't wish for more.

For a moment, I thought of the remaining death flags.

There were five more heavy events like this.

—No, it was fine for now.

I would do something about that with my own effort and my friends' help.

"You can use the miracle as you desire, as much as you want, and for your own sake."

I smiled sweetly while assuming the air of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Since I was tempting an angel, I had to try to play the devil as much as I could.

Chapter 45

Sky Throne (1)

—There was the sound of the bell.

Auguste Ignitia was listening to the ringing bells with a hazy consciousness.

Was it someone's wedding, or was it a funeral?

I hoped it's a celebration.

Auguste thought so.

Because there were too many sorrowful events already.

Someone's voice was mixed with the sound of the bell.

Aah, that was the voice of that girl.

He had to get up soon.

Auguste's consciousness awakened slowly like a foam rising from the bottom of the deep ocean.

❖❖❖

Auguste was buried in countless white petals in a coffin placed in the hidden passage. The first thing he woke up to was his danger sense screaming 'drowning!' at him. Erica Aurelia held the hand of Auguste who was reaching out his hand reflexively.

"Auguste-sama!"

Her voice echoed in Auguste's heart more effectively than anything else, eventually he was fully awakened.

Auguste regained his calm, poking the petals around him as he raised his upper body.

“Uuh, Erica... here is...? What happened to me...?”

“This is the hidden room of the cathedral.”

“Hidden room—aah, the one under the mural painting. You did a good job at finding this room. Even the royal family who knows the folklore only noticed some of it.”

“But, I’m glad. I thought that you really died.”

Now that Erica said it, Auguste just realized that the place where he was sleeping in was a coffin.

A smile tugged at his lips.

“Uwah, I hope this is not an omen...”

“Good grief. What a bad taste... ow-ow-ow. Ah, no, it’s nothing.”

There was a cat on Erica’s shoulder.

The cat pressed her paw against Erica’s cheek.

At the lovely and charming sight, Auguste gave a broad smile.

“What happened? Who is that child?”

“Um, in the middle of the confusion various things happened, and I picked her up.”

“Heeh, how envious. Not only cats, but I want you to also pick this stray prince... wait, this is not the time to relax. Confusion?”

Auguste remembered that he made his own way to the basement of the cathedral.

Somehow his memory was vague in some places, but he still understood clearly that the cause of the confusion was himself.

“That’s right... my ability was running wild...”

No matter how he thought about it, he couldn’t recall what happened after he went down the hidden stairs under the mural painting.

Auguste held his slightly sore head.

There had to be something.

Something had happened before he entered the hidden room and being discovered by Erica.

Otherwise, Auguste couldn't explain it.

According to Auguste's memory, 'before waking up, he should have had only a small amount of sensitivity towards the dragons and headed for the contract beast to wish for the utmost power.'

Yet, in him, the overwhelming mental stress was enough to make himself feel terrible.

"The contract beast... that guy, did the beast do something? Did I make my wish to that guy?"

"Auguste-sama, I also have just woken up, so it's impossible for me to know that..."

"It's fine, Erica. There is something I want to check for a bit."

Auguste descended to the stone floor with the help of Erica and touched the wall beside him.

He pushed the wall several times, then hit the wall many times using his whole body.

"It doesn't open... kuh! It's useless, the room is gone, there is no trace of the cave."

"Auguste-sama..."

"Here, was the room where the contract beast sleeps... there should be the Burial Chamber of Angels here. And yet, nothing."

Just like sands scooped in the palm of the hand slipped through the fingers, things related to the contract beast fell out of Auguste's memory.

He couldn't recall the face and name of that person already.

As if it had been extracted, he already forgotten completely about that person.

Auguste thought whether he was rejected.

He made the beast angry with his selfish wish, and exhaust its civility towards him. Surely, the angel had gone away somewhere else.

Auguste remembered a feeling of loss as if he lost a family member.

Strength faded out from his knees, and he stuck in that state in front of the wall that was supposed to be a door.

“Meow...”

The cat jumped off from the shoulder of Erica and licked Auguste’s hand.

Auguste felt comforted by the warmth of the cat who felt nostalgic for some reason. He caressed the head of the cat and smiled.

“Thank you, kind child, I’m fine.”

“Mrrow, meow~.”

While being stroked by Auguste, the cat made a sleepy expression.

Erica sighed, she lifted the cat into her arms and pulled it apart from him.

“Meow~! Meow~! Meow~!”

“Yes, yes, it’s still hectic right now, you can spend time with him later.”

“Mrrrow...”

“Auguste-sama, let’s leave this place for now. First of all, we have to manage the confusion outside.”

“What did you say? So the dragons are still out of control?”

Auguste aimed his consciousness outside.

His powerful spiritual sensitivity expanded to its widest range as he wanted it to.

Auguste, who instantly perceived the spirits of at least a hundred dragons, immediately shut his spiritual contact with them before he could perceive them too deeply.

He felt his heart beating fast.

Just by perceiving them for a moment, countless dragons' frenzied spirits were flowing back into him.

What a frightening power.

If he didn't use it carefully, his own spirit and the spirits of the dragons would be hurt.

Auguste strictly admonished himself in his mind.

“...Auguste-sama?”

“Aah, Erica, don't worry. I just checked the situation for a bit. Although there are many unconscious dragons, most of the dragons are still in frenzy.”

“What should we do to calm them down?”

“That's right. If we mobilized all dragon knights and made them connect with each dragon to directly calm them down from the inside at the same time...”

Auguste suddenly became silent.

He noticed.

With his overwhelmingly sensitive ability, he probably could calm several dragons... no, dozens of dragons alone.

Then, the burden on other dragon knights should become much lighter.

“...But, can I do it?”

“Meow!”

As if answering the question Auguste intended only for himself, the cat vigorously meowed.

That cry was just like a push on his back, and his face broke into a smile.

“That's right, there's no use in worrying about it. It is no good from the start. I will suppress the confusion outside even for a bit until the dragon knights arrived.”

“Yes. If it's Auguste-sama, you will be able to do it.”

“Hahahaha. There is no basis for that confidence though—”

Auguste rose to his feet firmly and held out his hand to Erica.

“Can you be the goddess of fortune for a moment? I feel like I can do anything if you are nearby.”

“Even though you are a monotheist, goddess of fortune... is that really fine?”

“It’s fine. My God is especially kind to girls.”

Erica took Auguste’s hand.

The two held hands as they went up the dark staircase.

When they reached the unaffected mural painting of God, there were a boy wearing a robe who seemed to be a mage of Harvan and the small unconscious dragon Goldberry who was wrapped in Auguste’s jacket.

Beside them, there was Erica’s bag on the ground.

Auguste didn’t recognize the mage, but he remembered the illusion that he somehow knew about him.

“He is...?”

“Aah, that is my friend, the son of Duke of Harvan, Klaus-sama.”

“Why is it that I feel like he got a very rude misunderstanding?”

“It’s just your imagination.”

Erica said so flatly.

Auguste stared at her suspiciously.

While doing so, his line of sight moved to the top of Erica’s head.

“Although this may be my imagination... something seems to have stuck on top of Erica’s head...”

“Just your imagination. It is definitely just in your imagination.”

“I cannot remember... but it should be very cute...”

“There was no such thing. Please give up.”

Auguste tried to remember somehow, but the memory was lost as if it had been scraped off by something.

He didn't know why, but he felt very regretful.

Erica crouched down beside Klaus and checked his condition.

“Klaus-sama seems to be fine.”

“He was also affected by my mental interference, huh. If he is a mage of Harvan, once his magical power recovers after a while, he will wake up.”

Auguste held Goldberry who was unconscious.

The golden dragon who could be said was like his stepsister, was breathing regularly with a peaceful expression.

As he looked at her, his stroked his chest in relief.

It seemed that Goldberry was just asleep.

Auguste who was about to wake her by his telepathic ability, suddenly became bewildered.

Could he perceive her lightly with this overwhelming power?

What if he crushed Goldberry's spirit?

Auguste was horrified by his imagination.

“Auguste-sama? Is there something wrong with Goldberry...?”

“It's fine. I'm going to try it now.”

Auguste tried a more careful approach than when he perceived the dragons' spirits until now.

He silenced his heart that seemed to make a fuss, and gently perceived the spirit of Goldberry.

He adjusted the output finely while holding her in a way so that she won't fall as if holding a fragile egg.

On the boundary level of the unconscious Goldberry's spirit which appeared smooth, there were ripples of various kinds of positive emotions and negative emotions, and they were flickering finely.

It was as though they were the small roughness on the shell of an egg which appeared smooth at first glance.

He was concentrating too much on the contact area and almost overlooked the waves of anxiety that were running through her spirit's exterior.

Auguste hurriedly retracted his telepathic power as it seemed to be the wrong adjustment.

Auguste took a deep breath and this time he stared at his own spirit.

In order to perceive the other party with a calm heart, he tried to drown out his own waves of negative emotions.

But he realized that was also a mistake.

By trying to erase the negative emotions, another negative emotion created ripples in another place.

By denying his own spirit and forcing himself to shape it, it became all the more irregular.

This was not good.

Auguste kept the shape of his irregular spirit as it was, and adjusted the distribution of concentration of his telepathic power by using its shape.

The part that was perceiving Goldberry, he adjusted the power of that part in accordance to his own heart.

Then, the part that had control over the overhead view of those movements, would become the buffer for that interaction.

He distributed several roles among his own spirit and carefully perceived Goldberry while keeping the balance.

“Kyu... kyururu...?”

Pulled by Auguste's spirit, Goldberry slowly awakened.

Her small eyelids trembled, the golden dragon raised her neck in Auguste's arms.

While Auguste maintained his own senses, part of it was in complete synchronization with Goldberry's senses.

Two different visions, different olfactions, different tactile senses—he even felt the difference in the rhythm of pulsation between humans and dragons.

However, it didn't paint over Goldberry's spirit nor did it lay across his own spirit.

He felt those sensations for the first time, but Auguste instinctively understood that this was the right way.

Goldberry spread her wings and flew high.

While letting her fly over Erica's head, he expanded his telepathic power once again and tried to locate other dragons.

It became even more precise than before, this time he was perceiving their mental states as well.

While keeping the boundary firmly so as not to be overwhelmed by the anxiety and frenzy of the dragons, nor overwrote their feelings with his own inadvertently, he perceived them gently as if stroking with the tip of a feather.

While doing such a wide range of precision work, he also controlled Goldberry's body.

Auguste made Goldberry land on his shoulder and at the same time shrinking the range of his telepathic power.

His heartbeat was accelerating again, this time with a different emotion than the one before.

He felt a quiet euphoria rising up from the depth of his body.

“Erica, if it is the me now, it may be possible.”

“Yes.”

“We don't have to wait for the other dragon knights, I may be able to calm all the

dragons in the Kingdom by myself."

To Auguste's words, a smile showed on Erica's face.

And the cat on her shoulder also narrowed her eyes as though she was smiling.

Chapter 46

Sky Throne (2)

While they were moving, Auguste woke a ground dragon for carrying load who was at the outset of the cathedral, and summoned it to their side.

He placed Klaus Harvan and Erica's bag on the back of the dragon and the small dragon Goldberry perched on the dragon's horn.

The party aimed for the outside of the cathedral with Auguste and Erica in the lead.

“At times like this, it's very helpful that the corridors are wide.”

“It seems to have worked right after its renovation as a cathedral. Many large exhibits, including the mural in the deepest part, had been carried in by dragons. Because there are many things that cannot be lifted by human power.”

“Originally this was a castle, right? I've heard that narrow and complicated structures are advantageous for defense.”

“It was so that a wide range of people can easily operate dragons inside the castle. The current royal castle, if you clean up the furniture, was also built so that people can easily move while riding on a dragon.”

Auguste talked with Erica, while he kept perceiving the spirits of the dragons who were falling asleep nearby or in a rampaging condition.

Occasionally, the feelings of fear and sadness of the rampaging dragons flowed back into him, but it was already not a big obstacle for him.

By keeping a balance between being a sensitive person who was easy to synchronize with the dragons and an observer who was overlooking it from afar, he was able to accept strong negative feelings without being swept away.

By the time they arrived at the exit, almost all the ground dragons could be put under control.

Because the dragons which had blocked the street in the surroundings had calmed down, they could see a group of people raising the Ignitia's flag approaching the main

street extending from the front of the cathedral.

“What a relief, apparently they come to rescue us.”

“Auguste-sama, apparently, there seems to be His Majesty the King and my father.”

Erica seemed to have confirmed the group's face with a wand that enhanced her eyesight.

Hearing her words, Auguste also borrowed the eyes of the dragon near the group.

Among them were not only the King and the Duke of Aurelia, but there were also the appearances of prestigious aristocrats such as the Queen and various families.

Auguste stroked his chest in relief as he looked at the figure of the King.

King Henry Ignitia was the most prominent in controlling dragons among the active dragon knights.

The confusion that had been going on would be settled as soon as he arrived.

He might be scolded sternly, and there would be even more malicious rumors about him, but since he had caused this confusion, he had to accept it.

Auguste was thinking about such things when something happened.

Suddenly, one of the dragons that was circling overhead changed its trajectory and flew towards the group.

It was a silver dragon of 20-meters class.

It seemed to be terribly frenzied and might have instinctively turned hostile against the armed group.

The approaching King and his group were not yet aware of the dragon currently speeding towards them.

Calculated from the average flight speed of a 20-meters class dragon, it would take about 5 seconds to reach the group.

Even if they noticed it now, they wouldn't be able to stop it in time.

Because the degree of frenzy was high, controlling them would be extremely difficult.

Auguste had been avoiding perceiving large winged dragons so far.
It was because of a light trauma after his failure in the jousting match.

(But, I cannot say such things like 'I'm not confident' or 'It's scary'... please, please stop!)

Auguste headed for the rampaging silver dragon, he released his telepathic power as if reaching out with his spirit.

While suppressing his feeling of impatient, he gently caught the spirit of the dragon with the amount of power as if lifting a chick.

The silver dragon, whose spirit was caught by Auguste, immediately hit the air with its wings and braked suddenly.

The silver dragon did a somersault in front of the King and his group and flew back to the sky again.

They seemed to have noticed their crisis at last, and seemed to cry something out.

"That was dangerous."

"Aah, somehow I made it. The spirits of the other dragons are also frenzied. Before my father's group arrives, I will make these rebellious children a bit more obedient."

Auguste added the previous silver dragon into the ring of dragons who were circling over the cathedral.

And then he observed the other dragons through the eyes of the silver dragon.

Find the dragons whose emotion was unstable, and perceived them with his telepathic power one after another.

Auguste repeated the spiritual contact with all the dragons, and finally he finished his telepathy with every dragon in the vicinity of the cathedral.

From small escort dragons to large dragons of 20-meter class, from winged dragons to ground dragons.

Auguste felt almost no mental burden even though it would be close to three-digit

number all at the same time.

Auguste believed with all of his heart that it was 'the mighty power given by the contract beast'.

At the very least, he wanted to give that beast grateful words once before it left.

Auguste was disappointed that it would never come true.

(At least, if you are still near, will you be watching?)

When Auguste lifted his right hand straight, all the winged dragons rose at once.

As he ordered, the dragons crossed each other and rearranged their formation while somersaulting.

It looked like a piece of fabric, woven by multicolored dragons.

"Amazing..."

Erica, and all the people who had been led by the King raised admiring voices as they looked up at the dance of the dragons.

The herd of dragons changed into various formations and colored the sky.

The carpet of dragons spread in the sky and broke into a wave by somersaulting with time differences, when they expected the dragons to fly about furiously imitating a large tornado or a maelstrom, the dragons instead made the vision of petals floating down with the wind that was caused by their gentle glides.

Auguste was able to precisely control all of it while sharing the vision, auditory sense, tactile, etc. of the dragons.

It was as easy as connecting hands, and as hard as a chain wheel, their spirits were tied together.

It seemed like a lie that he was refused when he tried to perceive them until several hours ago.

Auguste now felt like he would be able to communicate with any dragon freely.

It was a feeling as if he was accepted by the world.

Until now he thought that there was no place for him in this world.

But from now on, all of the sky would be his.

So it's like this, the feeling of receiving blessings from the dragons—Auguste realized that.

Already, the sky felt close enough to reach.

Through the dragons' visions, he was wrapped in the transparent blue sky anywhere.

After grasping all the dragons around the cathedral, Auguste continued to use his telepathic power in the order of distance as it was.

There were dragons that were strangely far away, it was unnatural.

Auguste tilted his head at that sense of incongruity, but invited them as well as other dragons near him.

“Ah, this is... it this okay...?”

“What did you do, Auguste-sama?”

“No, just a bit of miscalculation... you will be able to see a rare sight.”

Auguste who noticed the identities of the dragons earlier than anyone smiled bitterly.

The royalty and aristocrats of Ignitia noticed them next.

Looking up, the shadows of a gigantic white dragon and a gigantic golden dragon with their wings spread covered them.

“They are bigger than the 20-meter class...? No way, are those Thrones?”

“Don't be foolish! Thrones would only response and serve their King!”

“However, the figure of those dragons were exactly like the rides of the Founder King!”

“Ooh, how wonderful! To be able to see such miracles while I am still alive!”

The nobles of Ignitia were crying out such things.

It was Auguste's first time seeing the real ones, but he knew of their characteristics.

It was thanks to some religious paintings and sculptures.

Following Urthona and Tharmas, the successive generations of Thrones also appeared in front of the people one after another.

Auguste's telepathic power reached even the Thrones who were in such high altitudes that they absolutely weren't supposed to be able to receive his contact.

"Aah, they are the colossus dragons at the entrance of the island. To be exact, they were the dragons of King Guillaume."

"The white dragon is Urthona, while the golden dragon is Tharmas. I want to meet them once but I didn't know that it will come true."

"Is this unusual?"

"Aah, it is said that it's rare. Erica is lucky. It was said that, with the exception of the Founder King's generation, Urthona and Tharmas appeared only when the Severe King Jean, who had not yet made the throne, saved this country."

At that time, Ignitia was driven to the corner in the war with Gigantia, and the enemy fleets surrounded the Island of Messenger.

It was said that Jean, who was once a soldier, gained divine revelation at the daybreak and succeeded in attracting the previous generation's Thrones, Urthona and Tharmas.

The overwhelming strength of the ancient gigantic dragons made the fleets of Gigantia fell back, and Jean, who became a Hero, wed the princess of that time and became the next King.

He became one of the famous Heroes that most of Ignitian boys memorized.

Even more intense commotion was stirred as the figures of the Thrones of the Severe King also showed up.

Black Dragon Urizen, Red Dragon Luvah¹.

It was the first time since the Severe King's reign that they showed up in front of people.

"Is this really happening...?"

"It's the return of the victory and glory of the King..."

"Who in the world did this?"

Auguste moved to the center of the square.

Then, the Thrones descended to surround Auguste first, followed by the other dragons.

The dragons lined up orderly in the square to make way, and they lowered their heads all at the same time.

Everybody looked towards Auguste at once.

While gathering everyone's attention, he walked before the people dignifiedly.

"Ooh! The Child of Destiny who is blessed by the dragons more profoundly than anybody else!"

"Loyalty to the King among Kings."

"King... he is the real King."

At first, the archbishop shouted, taking off the bishop crown and kneeled towards Auguste.

The clerics followed the archbishop and in succession, Ignitia's aristocrats and knights also bent their knees as if praying.

Soldiers and the citizens, and people from other lands were pushed by their enthusiasm and adopted the same posture.

Only the King approached while everyone didn't move and watched.

"Father, my ability has caused a lot of chaos. I am prepared to receive any kind of scolding."

"Say no more."

The King held Auguste in his arms.

To the gesture that treated him as though he was a little child, Auguste's cheeks were dyed red.

However, the face of the King was more impressive, his cheeks were red and tears were flowing down his cheeks.

“Auguste! My son!

If these things happened because your blood is thicker than anyone else, stronger than anyone else, who will be able to criticize you!

You see, all the people, all the dragons, they are yours!”

Auguste looked around dumbfounded.

There was no longer anyone who looked towards him in contempt.

When the King released Auguste and dropped him to the ground, the Queen hugged him this time.

Auguste was embarrassed, but a smile seemed to gradually show on his face.

Shouts of joy resounded, and those gathered in the square glorified the blessed prince and the royal family.

From a little far away, Erica and the cat were staring at the happy family in satisfaction.

¹ You have known Urthona, Tharmas, and Urizen. And yes, Luvah also one of the Zoa from William Blake's mythological writings. He is the Zoa of love, passion, and rebellious energy.

Chapter 47

Sky Throne (3)

I saw Auguste being hugged by the Queen in the distance.

The people around them were watching the happy family with moist eyes.

I was also stroking my chest in relief.

Auguste seemed to have fully acquired the ability to connect with the dragons.

And everyone even recognized his ability without a hitch.

In the corner of my heart, I felt a bit of a bad feeling.

Perhaps because I was over-exposed to life-threatening danger many times, I might become hypersensitive.

But still, it was probably safe to say that it was over.

“Auguste will be fine even if you don’t help him anymore.”

[Yes, he is as excellent as I thought. We both narrowly escaped from death.]

The kitten on my shoulder—Palug answered me in a loud voice.

It seemed that the appearance of a kitten was the most power-efficient.

Due to the battle in the burial chamber, the power that Palug had stored was exhausted entirely.

What kept her alive was the power gained from a drop of blood that she ingested during her contract with me.

Through economising her power, somehow she was able to keep her form without dying.

Therefore, the current Palug could only exercise as much power as a kitten.

Palug stretched out her forelegs languidly on top of my shoulder.

Although she was exhausted, her expression as she was looking at Auguste seemed somewhat satisfied.

“After all, what did Auguste lack?”

[It is unlucky that child has too much talent. Sparrows can teach the child of a sparrow how to fly, but they cannot teach the child of an eagle.]

Palug shrugged her shoulders in her kitten form.

Summarizing her words, it was something like this.

Auguste's ability to perceive was too strong.

Toward his might, the dragons who were perceived by his power were scared.

The fear of the dragons flowed back to Auguste and was further amplified in conjunction with his own anxiety.

This vicious circle obstructed his telepathy with the dragons.

The only exception was the dedicated dragons that had been influenced by his power since they were eggs.

So it seemed that Palug initially thought of waiting for them to hatch.

But the only one who hatched was the small dragon Goldberry.

The remaining two dragons that were supposed to be suitable for riding were still eggs.

It was a matter of time before Auguste tried to ride using a general purpose dragon.

The problem here was his too powerful telepathic ability.

Even if Palug advised him to moderate himself because he had too much talent, she didn't know how much Auguste should weaken himself in practice.

Since only failures happened, Auguste began to doubt his own talent.

—*Did Palug lie about his talent to comfort him out of kindness?*

It wasn't unreasonable for Auguste to think so.

Even if he asked someone or read historical literatures, he couldn't find a case about someone with too much talent that had to weaken their telepathic power.

"Aah, that's why he can ride the dragon that was spelled with Intoxication magic."

[Correct. Although I didn't expect that the fear would diminish if you make the dragon drunk and that he would be able to ride on the dragon.]

Palug pressed her cheek on my shoulder and stared at Auguste with a faraway look.

When she was doing such human-like behavior, she seemed mysterious.

[That child challenged the general purpose dragons many times like he usually did, I thought that he would eventually be worn out and came home. I was surprised when I saw his flying figure.]

"Huh? Then, that Cursed stirrup was not something Palug had prepared?"

[Of course not. If I knew that the dragon was wearing such dangerous thing, I would have stopped him before he went to the match in the first place.]

Certainly, it was as she said.

After all, it caused the runaway of his telepathic power, and it became a big incident involving all of the Island of Messenger.

[Actually, I didn't want to fulfil his wish.]

"What do you mean?"

[In our contract as an angel, we cannot remove the possibility of failure. So in order to ensure that he could ride, I only had to weaken the power of that child.]

"You had to put your life on the line to suppress it. Because his power is naturally strong."

[Even if it is strong it is not impossible, but Auguste's ability is a blessing. That is the proof that he is loved by God. I didn't want to take away such a wonderful thing from that child.]

Palug gazed at Auguste and the people surrounding him as if the sight was dazzling.

[Erica Aurelia. I am grateful to you. Thanks to what you did, I am not afraid of failures, and I could bet on the potential of that child. I can't believe that I can see such a nice sight while I am alive.]

“You’re welcome.”

Palug leaned against me and rubbed her fur on my cheek.

As expected, she was a former divine beast, she was soft and had nice fur.

Well, it didn’t feel bad.

I got involved in the circumstances of Auguste, but the results were all good.

“Ah, but, there is something I don’t get.”

[What is it?]

“I understand why he couldn’t ride on the dragons, but how did you change it so that he could?”

[Aah, speaking of which, I didn’t have time to explain that in detail. Well, how should I explain this?]

“Please tell me without putting on airs.”

[No. It’s not that, but... I only helped a little bit, I almost didn’t do anything.]

“...Eh? What do you mean?”

I thought that she used a miracle for that.

So I was following her instructions with confidence.

To me who was rigid with surprise, Palug gave a small smile back.

[In short, rather than weakening Auguste’s ability now, it was easier to weaken Auguste’s ability in the past.]

“Please explain it in a bit more detail.”

[If Auguste can learn how to adjust his power, there is no need to forcibly deprive him of his ability. I interfered with the oblivion principle at the time of re-contract, and

planted a fake memory that his power was weak until he signed the contract with me.]

“Then, that really is not the power of the miracle?”

[Exactly. Because the power that we could also call a miracle is what that child already has originally. Afterwards, he only needs to use that power carefully by moderating it.]

I understood, but not really.

If so, was it like this?

Lied to a child who couldn’t ride a bicycle that ‘I will support you from behind’.

Then, gently released your hand from the bicycle carrier that had started running.

It was similar to that, but mixed together with supernatural ability, huh.

“What are you planning to do if you fail?”

[At that time, I was going to manage the situation using my whole being or the soul of my contractor.]

“You’re going to use my soul without permission in such a haphazard strategy?”

[Just be glad that it has been successful. When that silver dragon went out of control, I thought that it was over though.]

I narrowly escaped from my death again.

Without knowing, it seemed that several death flags had been avoided.

I shuddered when I imagined that Auguste failed somehow.

“What about the miracle?”

[I used it for the liberation from the constraints of my God who bound me.]

“Eh?”

[I am no longer a miracle-giving beast. I have stepped down from my role of fulfilling people’s wishes. There is no convenient contract beast anymore.]

I felt that Auguste turned towards me at the distance.

He was waving his hand my way.

I also waved my hand toward him.

“...Well, I guess you cannot make anyone forget from now on.”

[Oh well.]

“From now on since your power won’t be squeezed to realize the miracle, you wouldn’t weaken or disappear, right?”

[Yes. But I probably will not have such a long life. People’s faith for me is diluting.]

“Is that okay?”

[Ufufufu. I would like to see the wedding ceremony of that child if I could, but I don’t know.]

“If you are so worried about him, it would have been nice if Palug married Auguste.”

I recalled her lines at the scene and teased her.

But the kitten shook her head.

I thought that Palug was obsessed with Auguste, but it seemed to be different.

[After all, no matter how much I love him, he is something like a son to me.]

At that time, Palug was trying to help Auguste even if she lost her own soul.

I guessed it was different from the feelings of a lover, more like the wish of a foster parent.

[If a mother bound her son and made him do something he didn’t want... wouldn’t that be a curse?]

“...Maybe so.”

[That child does not need me anymore. The wings of that child surely will be aimed toward the sky properly.]

“...Is that okay?”

[It’s fine. If I do not declare that it’s fine, I won’t be able to leave, right?]

I heard a voice calling me.

Auguste, the King, and the Queen were beckoning me over.

Behind the King, Oto-sama stood by himself unnoticed, looking at me with a severe expression.

Ah, oh no, I had a bad feeling about this.

It was dangerous, so I was told not to go out.

My expression stiffened.

When Auguste looked behind him in question, Oto-sama immediately made a smile.

He was definitely angry.

But that was fine.

If I was dead, I couldn't be scolded.

Besides, until the state of the festive atmosphere surrounding Auguste settled down, the scolding seemed to be put on hold.

I exchanged looks with Palug and tried to head toward Auguste.

Apparently, everything seemed to finish safely—well, that was what I thought.

“This is stupid! What a terrible farce!”

A familiar cry sounded as if betraying my optimistic thoughts.

Pushing his way through the crowds of people was the figure of Louis Ode-Ignitia who had a red face in apparent fury and distress.

Chapter 48

Sky Throne (4)

Louis Ode-Ignitia appeared while wearing a number of leis that had become crumbly on top of his armor.

It seemed that he was pretty frightened by the crowds who were in the puppet state.

His neck was bandaged thickly exaggeratedly.

I heard that the scratch that he got when he was manipulated was much smaller than that.

“Don’t be deceived! Everyone should know that!

What kind of trickery this impostor prince used in the tournament!”

His voice cracked into falsetto in his hysterics.

Louis hated Auguste, and it couldn’t be helped if he hated him.

After witnessing such a miracle, he still denied it to that extent.

“Auguste, since this is about you, why did you manipulate the dragon in such a cowardly way?

Your Majesty, this guy must hide something suspicious.

You should conduct a severe interrogation!”

Louis spitted aside.

In a complete change from the festive mood, the crowds were shaken by the scandal he brought up and became still as death.

The people seemed to be perplexed.

One was the miraculous prince that was loved by God.

And the other was a skilled knight who had built real achievements.

Considering the character of both sides, they couldn't decide which one was saying the right thing.

But, there had to be few people who knew more than the rumors about the two people.

“Louis, are you still saying such things?”

“I will tell you many times until Your Majesty understands.

Because Auguste definitely did cheat!”

“Let me tell you again and again.

There is no technology to manipulate the dragons at will, except by using telepathic power.

It is possible to get the spirit of the dragon to go mad temporarily with magic or some kind of medicine.

However, such a simple method cannot make someone to be able to ride on a dragon.”

King Ignitia lowered his eyebrows and looked sadly at Louis.

From his expression, I could see a bit of distress.

“Louis. Stop making false accusations.

Is there any evidence that Auguste did something wrong?”

“Your Majesty, is there any evidence that he *didn't* do anything wrong?”

“This is a pointless argument.

If you accuse someone, you must show evidence backing that argument.”

“*Someone*? What's with that ambiguous way to say it?

It is not anyone else, I'm telling you to prosecute Auguste.

Or, are you planning to make some leeway for him because he is the son of Your Majesty?”

“You are saying nonsensical things.

Louis, calm down.”

Louis shook off the hand of the King who was trying to calm him down.

He revealed a fiery anger and shouted at Auguste.

“How can I be calm!

Auguste definitely did some trick!

If you examine him, you will find traces of forbidden magic in this country!”

“Heeh, for example, is it like what I found in your room?”

Another voice that was neither King Ignitia nor Louis echoed.

It was a very familiar voice for me.

A tall youth appeared as if breaking through the ocean of people.

His dark blue outerwear which Aurelia aristocrats liked to wear was embroidered with sparkling golden threads.

While sparkling with the light reflected from the sunshine of the southern country, he walked dashingly.

Beautiful blonde hair, emerald green eyes.

On his generous face that seemed to be infinitely gentle, was a smile that also containing bottomless evil.

That was undoubtedly the figure of my older brother, Eduart Aurelia.

“Eh~~, why is Eduart-oniisama here?”

[Meo~~~~~w, what a lovely gentleman... , eehh? That is Erica's older brother?]

“Yes, so what.”

[Please introduce me to him later.]

Eh, was Eduart-oniisama her favorite type?

He was a very different type from Auguste.

Rather, I wondered if she was fine with any handsome man.

I turned my distrustful gaze toward Palug, but she was merrily staring at Onii-sama without noticing it.

“Aah... Eduart, it's you.”

“Your Majesty Henry, I apologize for bothering you when you are busy.

There is something that you will want to hear as soon as possible regarding the investigation of the case.”

“Who the hell are you! His Majesty is talking with me right now!”

“Louis Ode-Ignitia, you must be quiet.

I cannot bear to hear your foolish utterances.

The one who keeps silent for eternity will look a bit smarter.”

Onii-sama didn't care about Louis and kept walking gracefully.

Oh geez.

Even though he looked so kind, that smile appeared villainous.

Louis who was ignored turned red and drew near towards Oniisama with his hand on the handle of his sword.

“Impertinent! Don't you know who I am—”

“Hold.”

A wand appeared unnoticed in Onii-sama's hand.

He didn't have anything until a few moments ago, it seemed that was magic.

Louis who was petrified after the wand was shook, broke his balance and stiffened in a pose as if crawling.

“.....!? ...,!!”

“I have something I want to ask you later. Please become a bit wiser like that until then.”

Towards Onii-sama's work, Otou-sama who was beside the King had an expression as if he had swallowed a bitter bug.

Yes, that was a bit too severe to deal with a member of the royal family.

“Eduart... that's too excessive.”

“No, Eduart. I don't mind it.

Is there any reason for this, Eduart?

For example, about what you have found in Louis' room that you mentioned earlier...”

“As one would expect from Your Majesty, that is correct.”

Otou-sama wanted to interject, but King Ignitia had forgiven him for being disrespectful.

Eduart-oniisama turned towards the King and bowed elegantly.

King Ignitia had realized something, and he sent a pitying gaze towards Louis for an instant.

“It seems that the various officials are all here, so I can report this here.”

“Aah, thank you for your work, Eduart. Please continue.”

“Then, by your will, Your Majesty Henry—”

Onii-sama made a dramatic gesture and turned around towards the other aristocrats.

“I was conducting a secret investigation along with Klaus Harvan and others who are not in this place, in accordance with the royal order.

As for the contents of the investigation, it was about the existence of ignorant nobility who is in collusion with Gigantia of the South.”

“Collusion?”

“Specifically, there is a suspicious flow of money between Ignitia and Gigantia, and an inflow route of magical slaves from the southern continent.”

Onii-sama answered Otou-sama's question readily.

Noises spread among Ignitia aristocrats.

In Ignitia, which was built upon the liberation of slaves, slaves were the most forbidden among the forbidden things.

Magical slaves who had their souls bound with inhumane sorcery were the worst.

Gigantia's shamans drove a magical tool made of metal in human beings called <Machining>, and enslaved them.

It bound the soul of humans by magic, robbing them of mental and physical dignity.

Humans who had been driven in with a Cursed Nail to their body would not be able to resist any command of their master.

It was to the extent that even the order of suicide was executed without hesitation.

The prosperity of Gigantia was built by faithful slaves who they could utilize as much as they wanted.

"Before we received the orders, His Majesty was aware of the existence of the traitor. Magical slaves who pretended to be ordinary humans and were hiding in the Kingdom. Prohibited items derived from Gigantia that were circulating in the back society. His Majesty suspected them to be one of the leading aristocrats in Ignitia... particularly Ode-Ignitia.

However, as a result of thorough investigation, your stepbrother Charles proved to be innocent, though."

"I... I am innocent. That's a false accusation, Eduart."

Louis, who had been released from Hold, was still on his hands and knees as he glared at Onii-sama.

Eduart-oniisama looked down on Louis with a smile full of composure.

"I don't know anything about the collusion with Gigantia.

I am someone who is connected to the royal family of Ignitia.

I won't be a friend of filthy fellows who use giants and slaves."

"If that is the truth, that would be nice.

But the evidence that we have said that you are the traitor"

Onii-sama took out several bundles of papers and scrolls and a sealed letter from his

favorite bag.

On some of them were the name of famous Ignitia's businesses that I even knew of.

"Your Majesty, Father, please check.

This is the back book of illegal transactions led by Louis Ode-Ignitia and instructions to the relevant ship.

Aah, please rest assured. All the mentioned slaves are already under protection."

"Hmm... what do you think, Ernst?"

"Your Majesty, certainly this is probably related to slave buying and selling.

They brought them to the bottom of the cargo hold using two sugar crates.

Indeed, it is as though this is a fake record.

Moreover, the foods that were loaded at the same time can cover more than double the number of the crew members."

"Duke Ernst, please show it to us too."

Otou-sama added an explanation about the document and turned it towards Ignitia aristocrats.

In some of the books, it was clearly stated that he had loaded human beings for slavery.

Anger emerged in the expression of Ignitia aristocrats who had read through the materials.

"N-no! This is false accusation!

I'm being framed by those companies!"

"Besides these back books, there is a letter about the secret agreement between the royal family Ode-Ignitia and the royal family of Gigantia—the Gattine family"

"It's forged!"

"Unfortunately, it's genuine.

The coat of arms which accompanied it was appraised, the seal stamped on this letter is unquestionably of the Gattine family.

Perhaps Your Majesty may remember this handwriting.

For example, when you were signing a ceasefire agreement between the Union

Kingdom and Gigantia."

When Onii-sama took out a letter, Louis widened his eyes.

He also forgot to blink and groaned with a hoarse voice.

"W... why, is it here... , can't be... this stupid..."

"Your house was quite strictly guarded, so I also burned a hand.

But just a while ago, everyone slept well.

Thanks to you, I was able to bring out everything that you hid.

I do not know who did it, but I must thank him."

When Eduart-oniisama smiled devilishly, Louis shuddered.

Auguste seemed to be unable to bear it and diverted his eyes.

Yup, that's right.

No matter how I thought about it, that was due to Auguste's wide-area mental interference.

Louis kept trembling in despair for a while.

However, he suddenly got up and turned a malicious gaze towards Auguste.

"Eduart, you should check Auguste again.

Auguste who is inferior to me cannot possibly be able to manipulate so many dragons.

He surely hides a grave foul play."

"Even if you are manipulating the dragon in a fraudulent way... you want to say that?"

"Wha-... , what are you saying! This quack alchemist!"

Louis cried out as if exploding.

Apparently, his intention of dragging Auguste down backfired.

Louis tried to stop him before Onii-sama could say something, but he was immediately held down by a strong soldier.

“Well, everyone, it is not just back books and letter that we had seized from him.”

“Don’t! Stop it! I beg you, stop there!”

“Please look at this magical tool.”

Ignoring the agony cry of Louis, Eduart-oniisama took out a small piece of metal from his pocket carelessly.

Everyone who saw it inhaled sharply.

It was a single nail.

The nail head was engraved with the emblem of the white rose of the Gattine family, and the whole metal was engraved with magical incantation from the South.

That thing could enforce slavery if you embedded it in a person, or change the body into a giant.

If you embedded it in other creatures, in exchange for complete control of them, they would feel unimaginable pain.

This little nail was the worst and the lowest torture tool produced by Gigantia.

“He’s lying! I don’t know anything about Gattine’s Holy Nails and the like!”

Louis screamed shamelessly.

But no one trusted him anymore.

Gazes of contempt and distrust were fixed against Louis.

“Well, I will not deny that I am a liar.

This was not seized from Louis’ mansion.

This magical tool was excavated from your dragon, Camellia.

By the way, what did you call this just now?”

“Guh...! Just now... that’s different! That was just a little mistake!”

The red face of the raging Louis turned pale in the blink of an eye.

Eduart-oniisama hid his contempt with an indifferent smile, he turned towards Louis and said:

“Do not speak, Louis Ode-Ignitia.

The only ones who call this a Holy Nail are the people of Gigantia... our enemy country.

The people in the Union Kingdom call this a Cursed Nail.

Whatever happens, we will not call this *thing* as something ‘holy’.”

“...!!”

Eduart-oniisama looked at Louis who became speechless.

I could see the quiet anger in his eyes.

“Your dragon, Camellia, refused for this to be extracted.

As long as she harbored this abominable magical tool, she should have known that she would continue to experience hellish pain.

She... surely, she tried to protect you.”

As if she loves you, Eduart-oniisama continued.

A serious gaze that was different from the dark smile from before was directed towards the other side.

Unintentionally, it also drew my line of sight toward that direction.

In that direction, I wondered if Camellia was still suffering agonizing pain right now.

“More than that, you have driven a dirty Cursed Nail into your dragon!?”

“Are you an idiot! You used a Cursed Nail for the sake of cheating?!!?”

“Do you want to win that much, you fiend!”

“You stain the image of the dragon knights! Compensate with your life!”

The anger of the people of Ignitia exceeded the boiling point, and condemning words against Louis could be heard.

It was not unreasonable.

That was an unnecessary act of violation towards the dragon and was an abuse.

Simultaneously, it was a serious breach of faith against the state.

King Ignitia approached Louis with an expression of distress and pity.

The King looked down at Louis quietly, but Louis didn't try to match his line of sight.

"I... I intended to replace your deceased father.

However, I guess it is impossible.

I am not in the position to inform you of important matters."

"Fuh...ahaha... AHAHAHAHA!"

To the words of King Ignitia, Louis responded with a hysterical laugh.

"HAHAHAHA! You're acting as my foster parent?

Not only the throne, but you're also going to take my father's son away!

I never once thought of you as my parent!"

Hearing Louis' outcry, King Ignitia had a deep bitterness on his face.

However, even against such nephew's manner of speaking, the King patiently persuaded him without raising his voice.

"No matter what you think, you need someone's backing.

Eventually, Auguste will need a trustworthy confidant.

I thought that it would be transmitted even if it would take me some time."

"Like my older stepbrother, you want to put a collar on me.

I will decline such a thing. I will not be tamed.

Neither by you nor the cowardly Auguste."

Louis stood up, shaking off King Ignitia's hand who was trying to reach for him.

Soon, both of his arms were restrained by soldiers once again.

“I will not accept your order.

That’s right, I will never lower my head to you bastards!

Not to the King of Usurper, nor to the Impostor Crown Prince.

Both of you are all alike, you see me with hypocritical eyes!

The royal family today is full of fakes!

The legitimate heir to the throne was supposed to be me!

Hahahaha! Be cursed!

Whoever attempts to unjustly steal my country, I will curse you all!

Hahahaha! AHAHAHAHA!”

King Ignitia shook his head with an exhausted appearance.

The Queen supported the King, while Oto-sama exchanged looks with Eduart-
oniisama.

“Bring Louis Ode-Ignitia to the prison.

Never let him approach his dragon.”

“Yes, I understand.”

With the clanking sound of metals, steel handcuffs were put on Louis.

Two soldiers came over to drag Louis.

As the tension loosened, everyone thought that with this everything was over.

“...‘Never let him approach his dragon’?

Hahaha. What an idiot.”

Together with Louis’ ominous murmurs, a small purple shadow jumped out of his tabard.

When the shadow grazed it, the steel handcuffs that were hanging on both hands of Louis fell away.

The two soldiers who had flanked his sides bumped against the purple shadow and staggered onto their knees.

Armors around the soldiers' abdomen were gouged as if twisted off and their clothes were wet with blood.

A small purple dragon perched on Louis' shoulder.

The small dragon spat out two pieces of metal dripping with blood.

“Go, Silvetica! Kill the filthy usurper, kill Henry!”

The purple dragon Silvetica flew from Louis' shoulder.

So, to summarize: during the tournament, Louis' skill with the dragon was a sham since he used the Cursed Nail on his dragon, which made his dragon do whatever he wanted. Auguste's skill with the dragon was genuine, because even if he rode on a drunk dragon, it didn't make him suddenly able to ride a dragon, as the King said. That was all on Auguste.

Chapter 49

Sky Throne (5)

Louis' dragon, Silvetica was speeding towards King Ignitia as if tearing up the sky.

The King and Queen immediately tried to call back their escort dragons.

With a moment's delay, soldiers, knights, and the aristocrats moved to protect the King.

However, several people including me were already moving with different intentions.

At first I thought that it was just a bluff.

There were many mages of Harvan in this place.

The assassination of King Ignitia wouldn't succeed.

In the first place, it was odd to take the trouble to shout the order because it was possible to manipulate the dragon just by thinking about it.

Louis' skill with the dragons was a sham, but his competence in battle that he was on par with Auguste was genuine.

He wouldn't make a mistake in judgement like I would.

I would make a conclusion first and added the reason later, I pulled out the Wand of Hold from the wand holder.

Louis ran towards me who was isolated from other people.

In his hand was a single sword taken from a soldier.

Why?

For certain, his means of survival was here.

Perhaps by making me a hostage.

Kicking my shoulder, Palug jumped out in front of Louis.

The former beast, which was only a kitten right now, was easily dismissed by Louis.
However, it gave me a chance to swing the wand.

At the same time with me shaking the wand, Louis stepped half a step diagonally.
As if avoiding the effect range of my released Hold.

I overlooked this.

Perhaps it was due to the dynamic vision of the dragon knights, or because he had seen Onii-sama's Hold once.

While trembling, I was about to raise the wand once again.

A time less than one second felt like a long time.

Auguste and Eduart-oniisama seemed to notice Louis' intention quickly.

However, it was still too late.

Silvetica who made a pretense to go to the King turned and broke Onii-sama's wand and restrained Goldberry.

It was too late.

Louis grabbed my wrist and twisted it behind me.

I reflexively chewed my lip to stifle my cry of pain.

The wand fell down from my hand.

Louis kept twisting my arm and stuck the robbed sword against my neck.

“The situation has reversed, Eduart!

How do you feel like being robbed of your important things!?”

The purple dragon Silvetica landed on the shoulder of Louis' who was raising a voice full of smug satisfaction.

I was struggling to extract my arm from his hold, but it was no use.

I stepped on his foot exactly with the heel of my shoes, but it was useless since he was wearing a hard armor.

How troublesome.

How did it come to this situation?

No, I wouldn't be killed while I had my worth as a hostage, right?

“Oops, do not move, Eduart, and also Sir Ernst.

If this girl is important, take your hands off from your wands.

Both of you too, Henry and Auguste.

You should make your dragons as quiet as possible.”

Onii-sama and Oto-sama dropped the wands that they had pulled out, and Auguste also stopped the dragons.

King Ignitia ordered the other soldiers and nobles to halt their attacks.

My eyes met with Palug's who was hiding under the wing of a lying dragon, but I shook my head.

She might be able to stop both Louis and Silvetica's movements in the blink of an eye.

But the price was her life.

I had saved her life with great pains, so I couldn't let such a thing happened.

While Louis was shouting for his requests, I took a deep breath.

Alright. What could I do?

I hadn't been hurt yet.

I couldn't move my right arm, but my left arm was free.

The only wands that I had were the dangerous ones to use against people, but I could pull them out.

My right arm was restrained by Louis, while my left arm was blocked by his sword.

His line of sight was looking towards the King and the others.

The problem was Silvetica.

Silvetica was glancing this way with the corner of her eyes repeatedly.

If I tried to pull out a wand I would definitely be attacked.

Perhaps, even if the hostage was injured in one arm, it didn't matter to Louis.

Even if I got lucky and made Louis stumble for a moment, I couldn't stop Silvetica.

Silvetica seemed unable to be controlled under Auguste's strong telepathic power.

By the way, Silvetica and Camellia were not joining the dance of the dragons.

Surely, the dragons that had been driven by the Cursed Nails would be outside the application of Ignitia's ability.

“I understand. Let's arrange for an oceanic ship to Karkinos in Aurelia.

I will be the navigator.”

“It's useless if it's you, Eduart.”

“Even if I'm unarmed? Louis, are you scared of me?”

“I'm not going to fall for that trick, Eduart.

Arrange for a female navigator.

If that is impossible, arrange for a navigator as old as a dead tree.”

“I understand. Give me some time.”

“The deadline is until sunset. If it passes even for a moment—”

While saying so, Louis pressed the blade against my neck.

Although the sword was sharp, the angle was not right, so the blade didn't cut my skin.

The carotid artery would be cut if I moved even a little.

As long as I moved.

Aah, I should move, huh.

I grabbed the left wrist of Louis with my left hand, aiming at the moment when the feeling of pressure of the sword against my neck was relaxed.

As it was, I pressed my cheek against the blade.

Hot pain ran on my cheek, and lukewarm liquid dripped down my skin.

“This woman will come with me... you bastard, what——kuh!?”

Triggered by my injury, the spell against kidnapping performed by Otou-sama were activated.

The range type Hold was released from the plain decoration buttons attached on my dress.

The bodies of Louis and Silvetica who were enfolded by the spell became petrified for a moment.

I couldn't use it against Palug, since she could avoid it during the time lag of its activation, nor Tirnanog who could reflect magic, but it was effective for ordinary humans and dragons.

Kicking his whole body as a spring, I rolled out of Louis' arms.

Auguste rushed out towards this direction.

Onii-sama and Otou-sama had already pulled out a wand and shook it towards Louis and Silvetica.

“Disarm!”

“Ice Coffin!”

The sword was blown off from Louis' hand and Silvetica who became covered with ice fell down.

Goldberry restrained Silvetica that had fallen to the ground.

I was trying to get away from Louis, but my legs got entangled with my dress.

I lost my balance and fell down with my hands against the ground.

Louis who recovered from the petrification was reaching out for me.

Louis' hands only grabbed the air a few centimeters from me.

Louis' arms were surrounded by a familiar magic circle.

Spell cards that were emitting light bound him.

“W-who the heck are you! You’re being a nuisance...!”

“Noisy.”

Klaus was standing behind Louis.

He glared at Louis with an exceptionally displeased expression, and struck his face with a fist wrapped in spell cards.

Auguste who jumped in at the same time matched the punch and punched him from the opposite side.

Receiving the two fists perfectly, Louis' eyes rolled to the back of his head.

He crumbled down on the spot like a puppet with its threads cut, and fainted with foam forming in his mouth.

While remaining on the pavement, I finally felt relieved.

Palug who was hiding also became limp in exhaustion.

“This guy, how dare he scratched Erica’s face. Who is he.”

“Are you alright? Press your wound with this.”

“T-thank you very much.”

I received a handkerchief from Auguste and pressed it on my wound.

Klaus looked down on Louis with a demon-like expression and spat abusive language at him.

Wah~, he had the best timing.

It was good that we brought him to the exit of the cathedral for the time being.

“Ow... my head is still throbbing.

Why. I don't understand the situation. Explain it, Erica.

Why are you in danger again.”

“Ah— ... Klaus-sama, if I speak, it will be too long.”

“Wait. She is injured right now. Shouldn't you ask her later?”

Auguste stood up in front of Klaus who looked awfully scary with a challenging smile. By the way, in the original game these two people never got involved with each other. Their characters were like water and oil, would this turn out alright?

“You... you are being over-familiar with Erica.

...Well, but, your punch is good even if you look like a girl.”

“Heeh? I look like a girl?

Does that mean I'm beautiful?”

“Whatever you say.”

It seemed that they got along fine unexpectedly.

Good, good.

But, Klaus. Because that person was the prince of this country, please stop being rude towards him.

“Erica, are you alright? Show me your wound.”

“Onii-sama, thank you for your concern.”

“Don't worry.

I'm sorry that I cannot protect you more.

Yeah, let's wash and disinfect it. It will sting but be patient for a bit.

Now, father has arranged for a doctor, so please wait.”

With distilled water and alcohol taken from the bag, Onii-sama finished the first aid quickly.

As expected, Onii-sama.

Cheat characters could do everything.

After inspecting whether there were other injuries or not, Onii-sama stood up and walked towards Louis.

While thrusting the tip of the wand at him, Onii-sama took Louis' pulse and confirmed his consciousness.

“Even so, how barbaric.

Since my opponent was vicious, I should work a bit harder, yes?”

“No, Eduart, I understand, but please put away the Wand of Merciful Death, it's dangerous.”

“Hih! Please hold down your anger, Onii-sama.”

“Hahaha... you're exaggerating.

I'm not mad at all.

I'm not angry. Rather, my heart is cold like ice.”

Eduart-oniisama smiled gently outwardly and said so.

However, no matter how I saw it, he was wearing an aura as if madness was rising from the bottom of the abyss.

“Oi, someone stop this guy!”

“Klaus, is it? You're not really going to stop me, are you?”

“I am sorry once again for not being able to protect her!”

[Mrreow~~.]

Palug who came back to me suddenly cried out in a happy voice because she was surrounded by handsome guys.

While everyone was making noise one after another, a doctor came by with Otousama.

While being watched by a lot of people, I was carried to the clinic on a stretcher.

With this, I was finally able to rest.

Chapter 50

Sky Throne (6)

Pure white petals fell down in the white city.

It looked like angels' feathers were falling down and fluttering about.

In the sky above the city, dozens of dragons and dragon knights were taking turns in circling and scattering the petals.

It was one of the important events of the Advent Festival which gave an image as if angels were swooping down upon the city.

Under the sky which was watched over by the angels, this year too, people were making sure that they said their unchangeable gratitude towards the angels.

❖❖❖

It seemed that the Lucanrant's doctor was good at what he does.

The wound on my cheek disappeared in about an hour without a trace.

After finishing the treatment, I went out to the city where it became a festive mood.

A few meters away from me, Otou-sama was escorting and watching over me.

I had used up the magic tool to prevent kidnapping, so it was reasonable.

Rather, I should thank him for allowing me to go out even though such a thing happened to me.

I wanted to look around freely, but I would keep quiet so as not to worry him.

[Even so, to stop the movement of pirates without any regard for injuries.

Having such a courageous friend, I am proud.]

[What are you saying.

Erica is a woman, so her face is very important.

Rather, it is good because there is no trace left...]

At my feet, Tirnanog and Palug were quarrelling.

I guessed Otou-sama didn't hear them thanks to the bustle, but I didn't want to risk it.

The current Tirnanog's equipment was made with several sheets of armor that barely escaped from damage.

I re-used the alchemy characters that I had originally carved and reconstructed him while I was undergoing the medical treatment.

Since the time and material were not enough, I somehow managed to make a simple version of his original armor.

The two fellow beasts who had become my companions had their combat strength decreased drastically.

I had no choice but to pray that nothing happens until we returned to Aurelia territory.

[GRRAAH! Shut up, cat!

What's wrong with giving praise for my friend's hard struggle!]

[Ahahaha! Such a slow punch will never hit me!

Such a slow serpent, you must not think that you can defeat me, the King of the Beasts!]

Circling around me over and over, the two started chasing each other.

Tirnanog swung his claw and Palug dodged it when it was within a hair's breadth distance.

Although I was sure that it didn't hit her, when I saw she kept provoking him, I felt anxious.

His current armor was small, but if it hit the body of a kitten, it would be a deadly.

“Both of you, Otou-sama is nearby, so please be quiet.”

[Umu. I understand.]

[Ye~s. I will be careful not to be found out.]

With reluctant looks, the two stopped their battle completely.

Their breaths were synchronized.

Yup, I guessed they were on good terms with each other.

I put both of them on my shoulders and walked again.

Drinks such as alcohol and fruit juice were distributed around the city.

Together with the words 'Thank the Angel', people knocked their cups together.

Adults, children, nobles, and commoners as well.

Everyone smiled and made a toast.

Unlike the aristocratic feast held in the royal castle, the difference in status seemed to have nothing to do with the banquet of the day.

It was a festival that seemed to make the gap between nobles and commoners thinner.

In this country, fundamentally, equality was the only thing under God which was stained.

I also received a cup of fruit juice and decided to participate in the event.

In the cup that I had received, a piece of petal lightly floated.

(Ah, how beautiful.)

I was fascinated by the beautiful image that somehow seemed to be a sign of luck.

Someone knocked my cup in a surprise toast.

"Thank the Angel. It seems that your wound has completely healed, I'm glad, Erica."

"Hyah!? O... Onii-sama, when did you-!?"

"Just now, I saw you playing with the cat and golem."

Dangerous.

If I was late in stopping the phantom beasts, they would have been caught by Onii-sama.

Onii-sama seemed to make eye contact with Otou-sama.

Otou-sama nodded and left with some escort alchemists.

That was the way to the square in front of the cathedral.

“The report to His Majesty has finally been completed.

Finally, I can walk around the festival slowly together with my cute Erica.”

“What about Otou-sama?”

“Father seems to have some business with His Majesty. From here on, I will be the one to escort you.”

“Thank you very much.”

In contrast to Otou-sama who had the tendency to leave me on my own device, Onii-sama seemed to be escorting me at close range.

I had to be more careful so that the identities of Tirnanog and Palug wouldn't be exposed.

Especially the cat whose eyes were hearts.

“When you say ‘reporting’, it was about the investigation with Klaus-sama, right?”

“That's right. With the exception when they were explaining the situation, Louis' faction was dramatic in various places.

Along with the report, I handed him over to a reliable person of Ignitia royal family.”

“Aah, I see.”

“Even after this, the investigation of Ignitia's territory in Karkinos is waiting for Louis' escorts.

It really hurts my head.

I need a fresh air for a while, or the frail me is going to collapse.”

“That is... thank you for your hard work.”

When I looked at him, Onii-sama who was full of energy turned around and smiled sweetly at me.

Even though he himself was lively, there was no doubt that the investigation was serious.

I would like for him to maintain his vigor during this short break.

“Speaking of which, why did Onii-sama undertake the top secret investigation?”

“Aah, it was by chance, that’s right... do you remember the collapse accident of the Ruins of Visitor two months ago?

After that, I asked for an estimation on how much money needed to drill the surrounding rocks.

Then, even if we estimate the minimum, it seems that it will take ten times as much as my pocket money.”

“I-it takes that much money, huh...”

It was a fact that my careless mistake at that time caused such a serious damage.

I put a smile on my face hurriedly so that my upset didn’t appear on my expression.

“It was impossible to continue the investigation alone.

I have just gotten the cooperation agreement from the researchers of Leandez Magic Academy, so it was a shame.”

“That’s truly regrettable.”

“But at such time, His Majesty Henry talked to me about the top secret audit.

Under the condition that His Majesty will become a sponsor of the excavation project, I undertook the audit.”

“I see... if the King joins, other Ignitia aristocrats are likely to contribute together.”

“That’s right.”

As expected of Onii-sama. It was a wonderful work.

He turned anything into profit.

If I thought about it, unless the case at the Ruins of Visitor happened, the events on the Island of Messenger would have been different.

Eduart-oniisama wouldn't audit Louis and continued the ruins excavation.

Tirnanog/Zaratan who was sealed at the deepest part of the ruins and fused with Ann, who died, would be kept unknown.

Klaus who was in a shock after losing his sister, wouldn't reoccur for a while. Naturally, he wouldn't be a part of the audit.

No matter how hard I tried, I wouldn't have been able to stop Auguste's contract ritual without their power, nor could I clear the suspicion that was held against Auguste.

The fact that I stepped over the trap of the ruins was going around and solving the problems in Ignitia.

It was said that fortune was unpredictable and changeable, and that disaster and happiness were two sides of a rope.

“Good grief, for the time being, it seems that I will have my hands clear of Louis' investigation.

When this work is over, I'd like to think about phantom beasts in leisure.”

“It would be nice if you could enter the Ruins of Visitor.”

“That's absolutely right.

But instead of that, I'd like to investigate about the beloved cat of the Founder King, Cath Palug.”

“Ehh!? Palug!?”

I was surprised when the name of the phantom beast came out from unexpected person.

I almost dropped my cup in surprise.

Palug herself who was on my shoulder also moved her ears with a twitch and watched Onii-sama intently.

“The truth is, I heard interesting stories between the audit of Louis.”

“What kind of stories?”

“It seems that there are also folklores of some monstro in Ignitia.

Variation are rich with lions, leopards, and cats, but they all seem to be monsters with the appearance of a feline.”

“H-heeh...”

“For some reason I was interested and searched for the remains of the scattered lore while doing some light investigation on one hand. Then, I found something interesting.”

“Something interesting?”

“The group of monsters recorded as countless figures and names may actually be one phantom beast.”

“No way...”

“A young King and a phantom beast who guides the Hero always appeared in the turning point of Ignitia’s history... thinking from an outsider’s point of view, they seem like completely different folklores and it’s interesting.”

Aah, perhaps the powerful awakening of His Highness Auguste’s ability was also because that phantom beast was involved.”

“Onii-sama’s ideas never fail to surprise me.”

It roughly matched.

What an incredible reasoning power.

It was understandable that Louis who should have been doing the collusion for a long time couldn’t escape.

“It’s not a bad idea to have a track record of investigating Ignitia’s phantom beast first.

Fund procurement seems to be going smoothly from the royal aristocracy as well, and researchers who understand about phantom beasts also can be increased.

It’s a good thing.”

“About the cat monsters, Auguste-sama knows about the details.”

“Oya, His Highness Auguste?

I see, then I have to talk to him about this.

—Also, about the reason Erica very familiar with him.”

“Eh?”

I see, it was certainly a concerning point.

From the viewpoint of others, it should look like we got along too quickly and that was very surprising.

From the viewpoint of a guardian, it would be very worrisome.

My contact with Auguste in the public place was when I said the poem about angel the day before yesterday.

“Don’t worry. There is nothing to be worried about.

Auguste-sama is a friend of mine.

When I happened to be in the cathedral, we hit it off when we were talking about the old paintings.”

“...Friend? Are you just friends?”

“Of course—”

“Of course, we’re not just friends!”

“Wah!?”

Suddenly someone’s arm caught my arm, and my heart was about to jump out.

When I turned around, my eyes met with familiar purple eyes.

Ah, that was surprising. So it was Auguste, huh.

He changed his clothes from the riding outfit to the formal wear of a prince in the middle of the incident.

But this prince, to suddenly appear and cut in our conversation.

“Heeh... Your Highness, if you’re not ‘just friends’, then what is your relationship with Erica?”

“Um, you mean that you’re my good friend, right, Auguste-sama?”

“Yes, yes, Erica and I, we are good friends.

Only for the moment though, *Onii-sama*.”

“Is that so. That’s good.

By all means, please be *good friends* with Erica forever."

Onii-sama and Auguste smiled sweetly at each other.

Both of them should be smiling, but the atmosphere between them were unsettling.

And Auguste too, why would he said something that could be misunderstood?

Combined with Onii-sama's siscon tendency, it became an explosive situation.

For a while, the two of them were staring at each other silently.

In the end, Auguste seemed to have lost and took his hand off of me.

"You are a shrewd person, Sir Eduart."

"I'll accept it as a compliment, Your Highness Auguste."

After saying such words, the tense atmosphere was slightly loosened.

Goldberry appeared somewhat late to her owner and landed on Auguste's shoulder.

She threw the piece of meat she was holding in right above her, snapped into it and filled her mouth with it.

"Yosh, yosh, you already ate enough, Goldberry."

"Kyurururu?"

"Yeah, it can't be helped. Today is special but from tomorrow you have to moderate yourself so you don't gain weight."

"Kuaa."

Goldberry rubbed her cheek on Auguste's, narrowing her eyes and swishing her tail back and forth.

Tirnanog was also cute, but the dragons of Ignitia were also cute with their cat-like gestures.

When I was thinking about such things, Goldberry caught my eyes and stopped

moving around.

Palug who was on my shoulder stiffened.

Apparently, Goldberry seemed to stare at her kitten form.

[Oh no... I forgot to delete the memory of that child...]

Palug muttered in a quiet voice that could only be heard by me.

She jumped to the ground and hid behind my skirt to escape Goldberry's line of sight.

[Cat... what a foolish guy.]

“Kyu...? Kyurururu!”

Tirnanog muttered in a low voice and shrugged his shoulders.

Goldberry was staring at Tirnanog this time.

Somehow, it seemed to resemble the atmosphere of Palug when she encountered handsome men.

She quickly flew over to my shoulder and put her forelegs on the face armor of Tirnanog.

Speaking of which, this child was curious about the content of Tirnanog since the start.

[!?]

“Kyuaah...?”

[Stop it! I, I am a golem! There is nothing inside!]

Tirnanog whose face armor was almost opened, twisted himself away and clambered down to escape.

When Tirnanog reached the ground, Goldberry immediately descended to the ground and followed him.

As they started chasing each other, soon Palug also joined in.

The three of them went about circling around me, then passed under the table and kept running.

“Oi~, don’t tease them, Goldberry.”

“Don’t go too far, alright?”

When we called out to them, those small beasts had already disappeared.

Oh well.

Goldberry was strong, and she was clever even if Tirnanog and Palug were also weakened.

Or rather, it was more dangerous for the identity of Palug to be exposed to Auguste through the sense of Goldberry.

I hoped that it would work out fine.

“That girl, she really likes Erica’s golem.”

“It looks like it.”

“I’m also interested in the construction of Erica’s golem.”

“No way, it’s embarrassing to show the internal structure to Onii-sama.”

“I see, that’s too bad.”

This was troubling... Onii-sama became interested.

But, if Onii-sama observed it carefully, it would surely be exposed that the content was a living being.

In addition, it could also be said that Tirnanog was a homunculus.

It would be difficult, but I had to gloss over it somehow.

“Huh? That’s Eduart, right? Ooi~.”

While I was suffering, I heard a familiar voice.

Onii-sama turned towards where the voice came from.

I stroked my chest in relief at the lifeboat that had fall down.

The person approaching was a student of Leandez Magic Academy who had a big

bundle held under his arm.

Messy silver hair, the uniform of King's Scholar, and a gentle and naïve smile.

It was Actorius-sensei.

What should I do, his glasses were crooked again.

While I was wondering whether I should point it out or not, Onii-sama fixed Actorius-sensei's glasses position in a moment.

It was a quick work that only took a blink of time.

「おや、気づかなかつた。
眼鏡がズれていたのか。
いつも悪いね、エドアルト」

「相変わらずだね、エルリック」



エドアルト・アウレリア

エルリック・アクトリアス

“You haven’t change, Elric.”

“Oya, I didn’t notice. My glasses have been crooked all this time, huh. Sorry for always troubling you, Eduart.”

Both of them felt somewhat accustomed with this.

I wondered if this kind of exchange had been repeated from long ago.

“Aah, excuse me, Erica-sama is also here, huh.

Uum... do I know the other boy too?

Ah that’s right, you’re the rider of Blackcurrant.

Congratulation for your win.”

“I am King Henry Ignitia’s son, Auguste.

Thank you for taking care of me during the tournament.”

“Eehh~~!? You are the prince?

I also thank you, I apologize for not recognizing you... I am a person named Elric Actorius.

I am Eduart’s school friend.”

Actorius-sensei hurriedly bowed towards Auguste.

As expected, Auguste seemed to be the winner of the tournament.

I guessed that was natural.

Louis who did wrongdoing using the enemy’s technology couldn’t be treated as the winner forever.

“You recognized him as Blackcurrant’s rider, but you didn’t notice that he was His Highness Auguste, Elric.”

“I was busy with the investigation of the violation that Louis did, so I didn’t hear the name of the winner~.”

“I’m sorry. Because of what my family member did, the school people faced some hardships.”

“No, no, don’t mind it.

This is the extension of our original work.

Even though it's regrettable for the two dragons, I got some valuable data from them."

When the topic of the two dragons—the White Dragon Camellia and the Purple Dragon Silvetica brought up, Auguste's expression became clouded.

"What happened to Camellia and Silvetica?"

"I'm sorry. Right now, we have no way to save those two dragons.

We removed most of the Nails, but we couldn't remove those stuck in some important organs.

It is regrettable that we cannot fully understand the biological structure of the dragons.

Besides, the embedded curse was the unknown kind specially manufactured for the dragons."

"I see..."

"But, I will never let such tragedy repeat again.

For the two victims, we can certainly find a remedy."

"...Aah, I will expect your success."

To cheer him up, Actorius-sensei who always seemed so weak, strongly guaranteed it.

With that, a smile finally returned to Auguste's face.

"Even so, Louis Ode-Ignitia..."

I didn't expect him to do something so terrible.

Even though I didn't have a dragon, I would never do such a heartless thing.

Do you want to see the inspection results, Eduart?

All in all, centered on the spine, there are more than a hundred Cursed Nails—"

"Elric, taking about that in the main street during daylight is a bit..."

"Ah, that's right, sorry."

Actorius-sensei hurriedly covered his mouth.

Auguste was pale when I looked at him.

Even I felt goose bumps along my spine, it would be even more painful for the people of Ignitia who cherished the dragons.

“Louis wasn’t supposed to be a person who could do such a thing in the past.

At least, every participant could equip the cursed stirrup, so why didn’t he use the Cursed Nails instead?”

“No, Your Highness, I personally think that Louis didn’t have a part in the stirrup case.”

“Is that so?

If that is true, that makes me feel a little relieved.

Certainly he and I have a bad relationship, but I don’t want to think that I was so hated that he wanted to kill me.”

Auguste said in a somewhat lonesome way while looking down and concealed his eyes.

By the way, the King seemed to be trying to believe in Louis until the very end.

From my point of view, Louis was just a bad person.

But for Auguste and the King, he might not have been just that.

“Anyway, it’s surprising. Eduart is supporting Louis.

Did you find evidence that is favorable in some sort for Louis?”

“As of now, there is still no physical evidence found other than the stirrup.

I have no intention of supporting him.

But, Louis didn’t get any merit in placing the stirrup.”

“Wasn’t it because he felt that a person closer to the throne other than himself was an obstacle, he tried to murder His Highness Auguste while pretending that it was an accident?”

“If he knew beforehand that His Highness would participate using the general purpose dragons, that line of thinking might have worked.”

To the words of Eduart-oniisama, Actorius-sensei tilted his head with a smiling expression.

It didn't make any sense at all.

As a matter of fact, Palug thought that he would fail riding right until the match started. Even though Auguste could have been expected to challenge the general purpose dragons, they wouldn't have thought that he would compete in the main battle and ended up crossing swords in a decisive battle.

"Among the participants in the 20-meter class, there were many dragon knights who were regarded as winner candidates.

Nevertheless, it is strange to use a one-of-a-kind magical tool on a general purpose dragon that you don't know who would ride it."

"Onii-sama. At the very least, do you know the origin of the cursed stirrup?"

"Since there was a minuscule amount of some soil in the gaps of the decoration of the stirrup, if we analyze this soil, we might know the source.

I'm sending a fast horse to Harvan right now and I'm getting the samples of the soil at certain places."

"Speaking of Harvan, does Sir Eduart think that this case is related to the grave robbery case?"

Auguste lowered his voice and asked around.

The grave robbery case of Harvan.

Indeed, it was supposed to have been a cemetery in the era of the Vampire Kingdom Cascadia.

If the damaged graves were the source of the cursed stirrup, I wondered if this incident was also caused by a spell of Cascadia.

It was too much to think of it as just a coincidence.

"I don't know. But, assuming the worst situation, my actions could never been faster, right?"

"That would make no difference.

If the fact that vampires were involved is widespread, the people of Harvan and

Lucanrant will be uneasy.

They are our important allies. I want to make them feel relieved as soon as possible."

"His Majesty Henry also seems to think so. As expected, you guys are alike. Why haven't I noticed it until now, I wonder?"

To Onii-sama's words, a pale rose color mixed on the cheeks of Auguste.

While he smiled bitterly, he still had a proud atmosphere around him.

Actorius-sensei nodded many times over the interaction between the two people and unpacked the package which he was holding.

From inside, a pair of stirrups with a heavy atmosphere around them showed up.

"Since these are very important, I have to be careful not to get robbed by someone."

"Why are you the one carrying them, Elric.

I heard that a mage from the school is carrying them...

At least, let me guard them with you, or I won't feel relieved."

"I have no choice, because I accidentally got caught by an alumnus from school.

I don't have too many acquaintances from Ignitia, so I don't know who to ask."

"Although I'm sure that is true—"

Eduart-oniisama's line of sight wandered several times between me and Auguste.

Onii-sama sighed a little and said:

"Elric, you are very lucky. You know one skilled alchemist.

Your Highness Auguste, I will return soon, but please take care of my younger sister until then.

Because there is a possibility that someone hostile may still be hiding in this island."

"I agree. I swear that only death will keep me apart from her."

"Hahaha, you jest.

I will be back soon.

Now, let's run. Hurry up, Elric."

“Eehh!? Wait, Eduart!”

Towards Auguste who was telling a joke with a serious look, Onii-sama gave a sharp smile and left.

Behind him, Actorius-sensei who was holding the big package went on to chase him while tripping on air many times.

I became worried whether my older brother could get married properly.

He should be popular with noble women, but he was a severe siscon.

I hoped there was a good woman of marriageable age that resided in Aurelia who wouldn't be perturbed with Onii-sama who had such personality.

“That person seems to be in a hurry to go there...”

“That's true.”

“Oops, I forgot. Thank the Angel.”

“Yes. Thank the Angel.”

Auguste took the cup that was served nearby and hold it up lightly.

I brought my cup to meet with Auguste's and said the thankful words to the kitten who ran away earlier.

“And also... thanks to my goddess of fortune.”

“Yes? Aah, you're welcome.”

For a moment, I didn't know what he meant by that.

Speaking of which, he did say something like that before.

Auguste reached for my cheek with the hand that wasn't holding a cup.

“Your wound, I'm glad it has been healed.”

“The doctor was skillful so I'm saved. I almost became a damaged good.”

“Hahaha. If that happened, I will take responsibility.”

“Auguste-sama, please be careful with what you say.

If you keep talking carelessly like that, the crown princess candidates would surge forward in great numbers.”

“You don’t need to worry, I will only say that to Erica.

In that case, it’s fine, right?”

Auguste widened his large and bright eyes, tilted his head, and stared at me imploringly.

That gesture made him feel like a cat somehow.

By the way, this person was the same as the one in the original game.

He had the bad habit of drawing close to someone on a whim, but when that someone carelessly approached him, he would run away and avoid them without delay.

He seemed like a cat who wanted to distance himself from other people, from his strong wariness to the bad habit of behaving for his own self-interest.

But, honestly speaking, Auguste’s careless way of talking could be a source of future troubles.

I had to admonish him as a friend somehow.

“That’s not what I mean, it is a matter of not being able to decline the marriage.”

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“If I refused, Auguste-sama’s dignity will be tarnished.

Like now, even if it was originally tarnished.”

“I didn’t say...”

“Even if it was just a verbal promise, I couldn’t possibly say no. And yet, you still wanted to propose marriage?”

I took Auguste’s gaze head on and stared right back with a smile.

After a few seconds of stalemate, Auguste shrugged his shoulders with a bitter smile.

“...I lost. Forget about what I said just now.

I won’t talk about making important friends.”

“From now on you will have more and more friends, so be careful.

Also, if you are seriously looking for a marriage partner, you also have to think about the national interests of Ignitia.”

“Aah, I don’t want to think about politics, no way. It’s troublesome~”

Auguste behaved as if he was sulking jokingly.

This Crown Prince, his jokes were a little bit too risky.

A sudden burst of sea breeze blowed our hair.

Trying to suppress the golden hair that covered my vision, my hand touched someone else’s hand.

It was Auguste’s hand.

While tangling his fingers on my curly hair, he had an expression as if seeing something dazzling.

His mouth curled in a reserved smile, as if his mischievous heart was taken away by the breeze.

“Erica, if...”

“Yes?”

“If I were still covered with malicious rumors, you...”

“Wait a minute, you guys! What are you doing!”

For some reason, Klaus came between me and Auguste.

At that moment, Auguste’s expression was already covered with a mask of a deep smile.

The words he wanted to say disappeared beyond those lips that were smiling a challenging smile right now.

“What are we doing... I was talking with my good friend, is there something wrong?”

“I mean, Klaus-sama, what are you doing?”

“No, really, *what* are you doing, Klaus-*oniisama*.”

Looking closely, Ann was standing behind him.

Ann bowed lightly to us and let a servant clear the cup that Klaus had thrown away.

Klaus made a grimace, he retreated several steps back and stared at his hand.

“...I, what am I doing?”

“How deplorable. Please get a grip, Onii-sama.”

Both siblings seemed to be at their wits' end.

As usual, they seemed to be on good terms and they seemed to be in high spirits even though there were various things happening.

“It seems that Klaus-sama has done a lot of efforts, thank you for your hard work.”

“Aah, you too, thanks for your hard work... I'm glad that your wound has been healed.”

“You don't need to worry, it was just a scratch.”

“No, I just don't want you to feel pain. It's for my own sake. I'm not worried for you.”

Saying so, Klaus looked away.

As usual he seemed to be upset about something I didn't understand well.

As someone who had been stabbed to death, it really was just a scratch.

Klaus accepted a new cup from his attendant.

I made my cup touched the cup of Klaus who was offering it to me.

“Thank the Angel. Anyway, that was one case being closed.”

“Aah, thank the Angel.

Since Eduart and I will keep tracking the investigation on the continent of Karkinos, this is a short break.”

“That’s too bad, huh...”

“Aah, that’s why, at least this time, you—”

“Thank the Angel!

You’re a terrible guy, huh, Klaus Harvan.

You didn’t care that I am in front of you.”

This time Auguste cut in between me and Klaus as he presented his cup.

What was that.

I wondered if cutting in people’s conversation was popular.

I felt like an invisible spark was scattered between the blatantly unpleasant expression of Klaus and the beaming Auguste.

“Auguste Ignitia, huh.

I’m glad that the malicious rumors about you are gone.”

“Thank you very much.”

“For me, whether the rumors were true or not, no matter what kind of person you are, it doesn’t matter.”

Klaus didn’t seem to worry that he was being rude, he put power into his eyes and glared at Auguste.

Auguste too, even if he seemed to dismiss it coolly at first glance, his eyes weren’t smiling.

“What is your relationship with Erica?”

“She is my friend. My important friend.”

“For me, Erica is an important... friend.”

“Hmm. The enemy of my enemy is called my friend, but what should I call a friend of my friend?”

“I don’t know.”

Klaus and Auguste shook hands firmly.

It seemed that the power that both of them put in their back teeth were unnatural.

“Auguste. It seems that you and I will be associating with each other for a long time. Unwillingly.”

“Aah, nice to meet you, Klaus. I will not hold anything back.”

One way or another, it seemed to be settled amicably, I gently stroked my chest in relief.

It was slightly dangerous, was this the friendship between boys?

If Palug heard that Auguste had made a new friend, she would definitely be happy.

“I’m glad that you have made more friends, Auguste-sama.”

“I guess you see it like that, huh~...”

“I’m glad that you have made a rival that you desired so much, Klaus-sama.”

“Just what the heck do you think of me.”

How weird. Both of them had even match their breathing properly.

No matter how I saw it, they got along well.

Perhaps they were *tsunderes*.

“Oops, I am sorry that my greeting was delayed. Little lady.

I am the son of King Henry Ignitia, Auguste Ignitia. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

“You are an unexpectedly formidable opponent. I understand well. I will face you with everything I have.”

Ann smiled sweetly while replying in a dangerous manner of speaking.

Auguste stiffened while maintaining his smile.

“I am Ann from the Duchy of Harvan. I apologize for my older brother’s rudeness. Thank the Angel.”

“Thank the Angel... you are brother and sister, but how should I say this, you guys don’t look alike.”

“Don’t say that.”

While making a backward glance to Auguste who shrunk back, Ann came closer to me as if gliding.

“Erica-oneesama. Above all, I’m glad that you are safe. Thank the Angel.

“Yes, thank the Angel. I have been indebted to Ann this time, too.

I guess Ann surely will not remember.”

“If it’s about the guardian of Erica-oneesama, I remember it though?”

I thought I heard it wrong.

In spite of myself, I looked at Ann twice.

Perhaps, she wasn’t covered by Palug’s memory alteration.

Ann met Tirnanog, but it was irrelevant to Palug.

Since Palug only made memory alteration by modifying the contract-related scripture, it was not surprising that Ann’s memory was left intact.

“Apparently, as promised he seemed to protect Erica-oneesama, that guy must have worked hard.

I hope that he will be pleased with a handicraft brought from Harvan.”

“U-um, Ann-sama, please don’t tell anybody about that child.”

“Fufufu, of course. Since it is inconvenient to cut such a trump card easily.”

While saying such disturbing things, Ann held her skirt and bowed elegantly.

“Lady and gentlemen, I have some people to greet, it’s regrettable, but I’ll be going now.

Onii-sama, I will borrow the entire escorts.”

“Aah, it’s fine. Even if you say ‘escorts’, they are weaker than me.”

Slowly, with a small devilish smile, Ann went away accompanied by her escorts.

Far from being a devil, she seemed to be a Great Demon, I became worried about the future.

“By the way, what was that conversation? Do you have a guardian or something?”

“That is...”

“That’s not good, Klaus. It seems that it was a secret between ladies.”

“She is hiding a secret in front of you, aren’t you a bit worried?”

Auguste made a provocative smile and tangled his fingers within my hair.

He played with my curly hair as if showing off to Klaus and tied his finger into my ringlets.

I was very surprised when the cup in Klaus’ hand broke.

“I don’t know about that. Secrets are more attractive if they were kept secrets.”

“I know that. Also, stop touching her with that hand. Somehow that makes me feel irritated.”

“Oops, how short-tempered, Klaus.

But unfortunately, I think that your punch will not hit me.”

“I dare you to try saying the same thing after you roll on the ground.”

“Both of you, you will bother the people around, so please do it in moderation.”

I felt a sense of déjà vu as I saw Klaus chasing after Auguste who was running around.

Auguste looked whole-heartedly happy, and Klaus also showed a faint smile before he knew it.

The people of the Kingdom were also watching the prince and his new friend with smiling faces.

Auguste could laugh naturally like this in front of everyone.

While I felt a little proud of my own hard work, I secretly made a toast to all the people who had worked hard for this.

In this way, the evening feast of the Advent Festival advanced in peace.

Chapter 51

Auguste Ignitia's Diary

First day of April, 1877

Finally, one of my dragons hatched.

There are no signs that the other two eggs will hatch, and I heard the adults saying that it is an evil omen.

I want to run away from here and hide in the secret room.

By the way, is there really an angel?

(They were written in very small characters at the bottom of the page)

On a certain day in May, 1877

I asked about angels.

The being called 'angel' seems cannot be an angel if their true identity is exposed.

I asked for the reason, but it seems that person also didn't know about it.

So it seems that you should pretend not to notice an angel even if you knew that they are an angel.

In that case, it can't be helped but to go along with it and pretend.

I wish there was someone who would feign ignorance about my own true identity.

On a certain day in January, 1878

Does a dragon knight who cannot ride a dragon and fly in the sky has a reason to exist?
Then '*I wonder if an angel that cannot fulfill your wish has any reason to exist*', that person replied.

Isn't it cowardly to reply a question with a question?

Recently, I always find myself in the cathedral whenever I have bad things happened to me.

On a certain day of June, 1880

I found a small light.

She is a small alchemist who came from the west.

When I tried to tell that person, she said that this is love.

But, why does it feel kind of inappropriate to express this feeling in a single word?

I wish that the star who came from a distant place can become mine now.

(A strikethrough line had been drawn from the top of the description)

❖❖❖

Auguste was leaning against a pillar of the cathedral and stood there.

He relied on the few lights that were shining in the dimly lit room and flipped through the pages of the diary in his hand.

Auguste felt a strange gap in his memory after a series of big uproots that took place on the day of the tournament.

He felt a faint discomfort and a deep sense of loss.

Looking for an answer for his unreasonable loneliness that he believed as only his imagination, he reread his diary after reaching a conviction.

“Angels... huh...”

In the diary, there were written discussion about angels, events that took place behind the history, advices on how to connect with the dragons, etc. that he exchanged with a mysterious person.

The name and identity of that person was completely written in an ambiguous manner.

However, when he first read the descriptions such as the history interpretation that felt as if the person had witnessed the events, knowledge of theology, and the events of hundreds of years ago, it felt as if the person was a real angel.

It was absurd.

It would have been more realistic to think that Auguste had an imaginary friend who he created to survive his own difficult circumstances.

But, he couldn't think that it was just an imaginary friend.

Auguste felt an apparent difference in personality between himself and the person who he wrote about in the diary.

That person sometimes felt like an older sister, sometimes like a teacher, and other times felt like a friend.

She knew things that Auguste didn't know, and she also took actions that Auguste couldn't predict.

Surely, there used to be an angel here.

But there was no one here anymore.

A sense of nostalgia and loneliness got stuck in his chest.

Auguste closed the diary, he thought of his friend who he couldn't remember any longer, and was about to run away towards the empty sky.

“Mrreow~”

A cry of a cat echoed and broke the gloomy atmosphere.

Before he knew it, there was a golden cat near Auguste's feet.

"Huh? What are you doing alone in a place like this, are you lost?"

Auguste held his hands on both sides of the cat and hugged her.

Whether it was due to exhaustion or because the cat was longer than he expected, Auguste's face unintentionally broke into a smile.

"You, I feel like I've seen you somewhere.

Does that person own a cat?"

"Meow?"

The cat narrowed her eyes in a carefree way as she was being held.

She was a charming cat that wasn't afraid of people.

When he looked carefully, a leather collar was wrapped around her neck.

In front of Auguste, the charms in the shape of a star and a wave that were attached on her collar were swaying.

"Aah, indeed... I thought that I had seen you somewhere before."

"Mrreow~"

Escaping from his arms like a magic trick, the cat landed on the floor soundlessly.

Auguste looked back on the direction the cat was running towards.

"Greetings, Auguste-sama."

A girl stood under the bright light falling from the stained glass.

It was the daughter of Duke of Aurelia, Erica.

The light reflected on her golden hair created an angel's halo.

She had silky white skin as if transparent that wasn't burned by the sun.

When her eyes met with Auguste's, Erica smiled faintly.

Her green eyes that were of a shade like shallow waters gave a cold impression even though they were beautiful.

She was wearing a deep ultramarine dress like the night sky which covered her neck tightly.

Her modest appearance that had an austere atmosphere like a nun was in harmony with this place that was called a sanctuary.

"Good afternoon, Erica."

"You have been keeping my cat company. Thank you very much."

"It's because I relatively like cats.

They don't care about being held, and we don't know what they are thinking."

"Ah, I understand that"

The cat avoided and escaped the hands of Erica which were stretched out as she nodded.

Auguste and Erica smiled bitterly at each other.

Erica was somewhat like a cat, Auguste thought so.

Although she was the one who came close suddenly, if he tried to catch her she would escape as much as possible.

Her wariness was high, and even if at first glance she seemed to be frank, she would never open her heart.

She would never reveal her hand, even when she had the eyes that seemed to see through other people's heart.

Even though she was surrounded by a lot of people, she seemed to be cut off from those around her.

A mysterious girl who was capricious, unduly distant, aloof, and held some secrets.

For Auguste who refused to live with others, her sense of distance was preferable.

“By the way, where is the golem that is in charge of holding your baggage?”

“I think he will come soon. Because there are his favorite mural paintings over there.”

“How extraordinary, it is a golem with artistic sense huh.”

“Ah..., of course, I just set it to look as if there is a will.”

“Erica is meticulous.”

Despite being a young girl of eight years old, Erica was an excellent alchemist.

Auguste had seen a few golems before, but he had never seen an elaborate one like the golem she had made.

The golem made of star steel that was named ‘Tirnanog’ was moving as if it was alive.

As they were talking about it, Tirnanog emerged with a large leather bag.

There were many magic tools such as wands packed in the bag.

When she noticed the footsteps of Tirnanog, Goldberry who was sleeping by the sculpture near the skylight woke up.

When Goldberry landed on the shoulder of Tirnanog, Tirnanog trembled as if it was frightened.

Auguste seized the back of Goldberry who was jumping around.

“Goldberry, please behave like a lady.”

“Kyu!”

When Goldberry nodded, she landed a few steps away from Tirnanog.

As she walked slowly in front of Tirnanog, she bowed with her wings spread quietly. Tirnanog also observed her for a few seconds and then lowered its head as if in response.

“Every time I see it, Erica’s golem is clever.”

“Ahaha... the current technology sure is wonderful.”

“Now that we all present, shall we leave?

...Uh, the best place has gone.

If there is a place where Erica wants to go, I will take you there.”

“Yes, please.”

The Island of Messenger where the Advent Festival ended had a somewhat lonely atmosphere.

Auguste liked the unique loneliness after the festival.

I hope Erica likes it too, Auguste walked while thinking such a thing.

He heard something falling behind him.

When Auguste looked back, his eyes met with the cat who was there before he knew it.

In front of the cat, Auguste’s diary had fallen down with the opened pages facing down.

“Meow?”

“Aah, it fell out of my pocket, huh.

I’m sorry. Are you surprised?”

Auguste picked up the diary and casually ran his eyes on the opened page.

He gazed at the page that was supposed to be a blank sheet and stopped moving for a while.

“Is there something wrong?”

“No, never mind. Let’s go.”

Auguste put the diary in his pocket and urged Erica.

Only the cat knew that the grief of loss had disappeared from that expression.

❖❖❖

The day after the Advent Festival, 1880

Erica and I went around the city.

I can hardly wait for the day when I can see her again.

Apparently, the meddling angel has hidden her figure, but she seems to be still watching the people.

(A description was written on the next page with a handwriting of another person other than Auguste)

You can already fly alone.

Someday, I’m sure your hands will reach the star.

Chapter 52

Where the Sun Sets

A carriage with Aurelia's coat of arms went on the bridge over the sea.

Since time hadn't long passed since the high tide, the sea water was thinly scattered over the stone pavement.

Splashes of seawater splashed up on the wheels that were bathed by the golden lights of the sunset.

From the window of the horse-drawn carriage, Palug was gazing at the Island of Messenger that was becoming farther away.

The island looked like a towering stronghold as it made a dark shadow upon the sea.

It was an island where many traces of angels were left behind.

It was a place where she had lived for hundreds of years.

It was a place where numerous memories slept.

A place where her home was supposed to be.

[I am destined to be forgotten forever.

Still, the current freedom is not bad.

To the extent that I am immersed in the sentiments of parting, I am free.]

Palug muttered without speaking to anyone.

The sun went down while gradually repainting the color of the world.

The sea surrounding the island was golden and the sky was shining in the color of flame.

She was staring at that sight where the bright red sun, who loved her more than

anyone, blended into the ocean.

[Farewell, my God, my King, my people.

—Farewell, my Prince.]

Her voice that was saying goodbye, along with the sweet sentiment, melted in the sea breeze and disappeared.

[You're being overdramatic, cat.]

[Because~, I will be swept away to the West, right?

I will not be able to meet Auguste.

It will be lonely and that's the same as being dead.]

A cat with golden coat stiffly fluttered over the horse-drawn carriage seat.

The carriage was still on the bridge connecting the continent with the island, even after leaving the Island of Messenger for more than ten minutes.

That was too quick to feel homesick.

However, as the new contractor, I also had to care about the well-being of the phantom beast.

“Please bear with it for six more years. At that time, you will see Auguste-sama’s face almost every day.”

[Eh? What, what?

Erica, are you going to get married to Auguste that soon?

Yaay! At that time, please take me along with your wedding preparations to Ignitia!]

Palug expressed her joy by jumping up and down as if her lack of energy just now was a lie.

She had a terrible misunderstanding, so I had to correct it.

“Both Auguste-sama and I are supposed to enroll in the Leandez Magic Academy. Palug also may as well come with me to the school dormitory. I’m sorry that I am not from Ignitia.”

[Is that so? But, how do you know things that will happen six years in the future?]

[It is a story of the aforementioned oracle.]

[Oracle? What is that?]

I nodded.

It was not possible to exclude one person in a group, besides it was fine for Palug to know about it.

But, how should I explain it?

“I have gotten a future oracle that could happen.

The result of the oracle is brought in the form of a vision seen from the eyes of a certain person.

The only place I could see is Leiandez, and the period is only a short period of six years in the future.”

[That looks like a fairly restrictive oracle.

I don’t know how useful that is.]

“Not really.

To tell the truth, the fact that I could predict about *that incident* was also from the information in the oracle.”

[The information that an angel like you was lurking was not included even a single word though.]

Auguste fell from the dragon in the tournament.

Erica scorned him blatantly.

The depressed Auguste fused with the contract beast and gained the capability to ride.

These were the only information on the incident of the Advent Festival.

How did it end up becoming like this?

Aah, but when I thought about it, the incident six years in the future was called 'The St. Angel Anthropophagism Case'.

I thought that it was the scenario's title since it was an incident that occurred on Holy Angel's holiday.

I would never think that an *actual angel* was the culprit.

[Because of the oracle?

Did you help Auguste only for that reason?

You must have a lot of near-death experiences.

You, you can't simply be a good-natured person.]

Palug snapped at me as if she was about to jump down my throat.

She was exposing her teeth and bristling in anger.

The face of a cat was unexpectedly rich in expression.

[Well, I wasn't planning on dying though...]

"Palug, I have a good reason.

If we didn't stop your fusion with Auguste-sama, I will be killed and eaten alive.

And you will have used up your remaining power after six years, because you are only a fragment of what you were."

[In fact, she almost *did* being eaten alive by a cat.]

Palug blushed and looked at me with an embarrassed expression.

After freezing for a few seconds, she opened her mouth while tilting her neck.

[Then, wouldn't it be fine if you just don't enter Leandez Magic Academy?]

[Umu, what the cat said is true.]

"Both of you, if I did that, wouldn't someone else be eaten instead of me?"

To my words, Tirnanog and Palug exchanged looks with each other.

[Hey, as expected this child is bottomless...]

[Umu. Only this time I will agree with you.]

The two of them repeatedly glancing at me while whispering with each other.

I already knew that I had no planning ability, so I wished they didn't keep criticizing me.

Next time, I would have to do better.

Trying to escape from the prickling gazes, I forcibly returned to the previous conversation.

“According to the oracle, there are five more incidents that will cause my death six years in the future.

From now on, Tir and I may take strange actions secretly, but I want you to pretend it doesn't happen.”

[It's related to my important friend, Erica's life. I will not let you say no.]

[Well, I see. That's right. In that case, it cannot be helped.]

About my request and Tirnanog's threat, Palug had a somewhat determined look.

She stood up on her hind limbs and hit her chest with her right foreleg.

[I will lend you a hand. You are in need of more collaborators, aren't you?]

“Ehh! There is no need for Palug to go to that extent.

Since your life has been extended with so much troubles, I want you to take care of yourself.”

[I am a phantom beast that has made a contract with you. So please rely on me more.

I have been considerably weakened, so it would be difficult for me to battle.

Unlike the serpent over there, wouldn't it save you some trouble if you have more personnel who can move to attack from the rear?]

[Umu...]

Certainly, if I had to say my real intention, I really wanted to borrow the help of the

cat.

Even more so since she was the strongest cat-type phantom beast.

“Well then, may I ask for a favour?”

[Leave it to me. My life is saved by you. I will dedicate it to you.]

“Wait, that’s too heavy. I don’t need your life.”

[Then, I will help you to appreciate the beauty of blonde hair and purple eyes.]

[Hey cat, that would be too trivial.]

[I-it’s not for you, but for my precious Auguste.]

“Aah, then I’m convinced.”

[Is this okay, Erica...]

Anyway, my reliable friends increased.

I didn’t feel like I would be defeated with the combination of the world’s largest black dragon and the strongest actual angel by my side.

Although I was a bit uneasy since both of them were weakened.

[If you have decided, I would like you to buy some clothes.

With the appearance of a cat, there are limits to the actions that can be done.]

“I understand. What kind of clothes do you want?”

[Two kinds of clothing first, for a man and a woman. One is in merchant-style and one aristocratic-style.

The most important things are boots that fit perfectly with my feet.]

In that way, Palug transformed into a human figure abruptly and raised her feet so as to show off.

I hurriedly closed the curtain of the carriage.

I didn’t think anyone was watching, but that was bad for my heart.

[Do not look unsightly.

Without the discipline of a domestic cat, the one who will be criticized is not you but

Erica.]

[What a noisy serpent.]

Palug returned to the form of a kitten and looked away from Tirnanog with a huff.

“Both of you, I wonder if you can get along a little more.”

[You ask me to get along with this guy? No matter how much my friend requested it, that is an unreasonable request.]

[Eeh~? I am always friendly, you know?]

[In what way are you friendly.]

[Please be grateful. Because I didn't kill you.]

[You should regret it. That you didn't kill me before.]

In the horse-drawn carriage, the two phantom beasts were running around and made the carriage felt even more crowded.

Sometimes they looked as if they got along, sometimes they didn't, I felt lost in my judgement.

Still, they both had friends to quarrel with, and above all they seemed to be having fun for some reason.

While being bathed in golden lights, the carriage we rode was running.

The lonely phantom cat turned towards the place where nobody knew her.

But no one would forget her anymore.

Even in the place where the sun set far westward, the cat would surely be able to do well.

Chapter 53

Eduart Aurelia's Investigation Record

■ Historia Electrum

Classification type : Black

Class number : 0004

Date : 1880/07/01

Place : Karkinos · Ignitia's territory <City of Reconquest> , Margrave Ode-Ignitia's residence, Sanctuary Tower

✧✧✧

The room made of stone was divided into two by iron bars.

The interior was dim, and couldn't be determined whether it was day or night.

The surface of the floor was sandy and the air was dry.

There were two people in the room.

On the other side of the iron bars, Louis Ode-Ignitia was sitting on a simple chair.

On this side, a secretary wearing the emblem of the Ignitia royal family headed to the desk with a pen in hand and observed Louis.

The heavy iron door opened.

Three people consisted of Eduart Aurelia, Elric Actorius, and Klaus Harvan entered the room.

Louis gave a sidelong glance and confirmed the appearances of the people who just entered.

The secretary stood up and left the room passing by the three people.

Eduart put the chair where the secretary sat before in front of Louis and sat down.

Elric and Klaus were standing at the right rear and left rear, respectively, of Eduart. Elric pressed a handkerchief on his sweaty forehead, and Klaus was also wiping the sweats that were dripping down his chin unpleasantly with his sleeve. However, Eduart and Louis kept a calm expression without sweating.

“Hm, so today is you, huh. Eduart Aurelia.

I will tell you, even if you asked me many times, my argument will stay the same.”

“I’m sorry for betraying your expectations.

But today I’m not here to ask you about the crime you have committed.”

“What did you say?”

The expression of Louis became steep hearing the words of Eduart.

Klaus stared at Eduart with his eyebrows furrowed.

“Oi, Eduart—”

“Klaus-kun, you don’t need to worry.

You ought to do it as we have discussed.

It’s just that the content of the interrogation will change just a bit.”

Eduart handed one piece of amber with the size of a bean to Klaus.

Klaus swallowed the words he wanted to speak and started to cast a spell.

Spell cards were deployed throughout the room, and a magical light similar to the moonlight shone.

As the magic circle was completed, Historia Electrum was established.

After this, several types of magic observation results including Glam Sight were added to the record information.

Elric also prepared a staff and spell cards.

After preparing so he would be able to cast at any time, Elric made eye contact with Eduart.

“Today is awfully grandiose. What are you going to do to me?”

“It’s just a little chat. Please be at ease.

That’s right, for example... have you gotten used to your new life?”

“What, have you come to ridicule me? You sure have a lot of free time, Eduart.”

Louis glared at Eduart as he reclined on the shabby chair.

“Hm. How could I get used to this. This is the worst.

This room has a poor ventilation, it’s dusty, and it’s hot.

The meal is also unpleasant. And the bed is hard.

Who the heck do you think I am. In the first place, you guys are supposed to be charged for lese majeste.”

“Unfortunately, your ‘Kingdom’ is only limited to the inside of that iron bars.

Stop forcing your delusion into this side.”

Listening to Eduart’s response, Louis clicked his tongue.

“Delusion? What you see is the reality, Eduart.”

“Reality, huh... Apparently, there seems to be a discrepancy between mine and your reality.

Can you explain about the ‘reality’ you think of?”

“That’s fine. Listen carefully.

And think carefully. Together with the hanger-on behind you.

It’s better for you to sit, I will explain it so that even fools can also understand it.”

Louis leaned forward in his chair and lowered his voice.

“Listen, I am the legitimate successor to the Ignitia’s throne.”

Eduart shrugged his shoulders.

“I’m tired of hearing that claim.”

“Because you don’t understand, it is getting repeated many times.

I feel a little sorry for you.

Today there is no that abominable foolish older brother of mine, and the secretary that Henry had handed over was taken away by you.

...I will add special, important judgment materials.”

“I see. I hope that this will not be a boring conversation.”

“Far from boring, it will shock you to the core.

What I’m going to do is to talk about the dark side of Ignitia.”

As Louis finished his words, he raised his lips in a form of a smile.

“I have a higher opinion of you, Eduart, than any of the other foolish people.

You are not as good as I am, but you are an excellent guy.

That’s why, after you listen to this story, you would want to get to this side.”

Eduart silently urged him to continue.

“My argument that the current King, Henry, is an usurper has a firm basis.

It is impossible to say these things in front of the people who have only breathed the present government.

Of course, there’s no need to say anything about what I said here.”

“Alright. I swear to God, that what you said here won’t leave this room.”

“You are someone who doesn’t believe a thing about something like God, do not spout oaths to God carelessly.

Swear to the most important thing to you.”

Then, Eduart was contemplating it for several seconds.

Eduart raised one hand and declared.

“I swear to my beloved sister, Erica Aurelia.”

“Yosh. The other two also have to do it.”

“Oi, us too?”

“Klaus-kun, Elric, I’m begging you. Please go along with me.”

Klaus and Elric, while being reluctant and shy respectively, were raising their hands.

“Then me too... no, I decided to swear to my sister. Is this OK?”

“I can swear to God normally, right?

I swear to never speak anything I’ve heard here.”

“Alright. I will talk. Be grateful.”

After he said that arrogantly, Louis leaned his body forward once again.

“The First Prince who was the Crown Prince died in a mysterious death in the period when the previous King was in his sickbed.

As you can expect, my father who was the Second Prince should have inherited the throne.

However, in fact it was Henry who was the Third Prince that had inherited the throne.

Don’t you think it is strange?”

Eduart didn’t answer.

Louis kept going without regard.

“This is the first fact. The First Prince was not the only one who died a mysterious death.

His twin sister, the First Princess was also dead at the same time.

Officially, the First Princess was supposed to have died a week earlier, but it was clearly a falsehood.

The First Prince was not present at the funeral of the First Princess due to some

'illness'.

Also, there was no one who saw the inside of the coffin at the funeral of the First Prince."

"At that time, you shouldn't have been born yet."

"It is the information I gained from reliable sources. The same testimony can be picked up from several other people."

Louis kept going after a while.

"This is the second fact.

Just before the death of the First Princess was announced, a Count was invited to the Island of Messenger.

The Count was ordered to be the instructor of the newly constructed ground dragon unit and was given a mansion owned by the royal family.

Strangely, although the mansion was prepared the same day, it was only a few days after his arrival that the decree was issued.

Moreover, although the Countess said that she just gave birth to her son, she accompanied her husband to the Island of Messenger."

"...What are you trying to say?"

"I want to say that the purpose of this sudden imperial command was his wife. Do you understand now?"

Louis glared at Eduart.

Eduart kept smiling and took Louis' glare head on.

"Do not be stupid. You realized it by now, right?"

"I wonder."

"The First Princess gave birth before she died.

Or, her child was taken from her womb right after she died.

The invited Countess secretly played the role of a nanny."

"What did you—"

Klaus suddenly raised his voice.

Eduart looked back and held his forefinger in front of his lips.

Klaus held his mouth with the palm of his hand and retreated one step back.

“If we go by Ignitia’s custom, the firstborn inheritance is the principle.

Let’s assume that my father abandoned his inheritance right unwillingly.

However, if the firstborn of the First Princess had reached adulthood, Henry should return the throne to him.”

“If the child hasn’t abandoned his succession right to the throne, that’s correct.”

“I thought you would say so, Eduart.”

Louis stood up in a dramatic manner.

Looking down at Eduart who was sitting on the chair, Louis continued.

“This is the last piece, Eduart.

Before I was born, my father had abandoned the right to inherit because he didn’t have a child for so many years.

However, despite my father’s abandonment of his succession, I am still ranked third in the succession for the throne.

Have you understood it yet?

I am the First Princess’ child, the True King.”

Louis declared it loudly.

Eduart opened his mouth after being silent for a while.

“Is that your argument?”

“What?”

“I have listened to your story until the end.

If you have nothing more to say, please sit down.

If it’s true that the throne is behind you.”

“Wha... you bastard...”

Louis' face flushed in anger at the assertion, but sat down according to Eduart's words.

“By the way, Louis Ode-Ignitia, how old will you be this year?”

“Why so sudden? How is this concern you?”

“I want to hear a clear answer from your mouth. Humor me.”

“I'm 14 years old. I will be 15 when October comes.”

“So, how many years has passed since His Majesty Henry enthroned?”

“Nineteen... no, it was about 20 years?”

“According to your survey, how many years ago was this incident—the death of the First Prince and the First Princess, happened?”

“It was... twenty years ago..., w-wait, wait a minute...”

Eduart, wait, wait please..., I want to take a deep breath.”

Louis' face was pale.

Eduart shrugged his shoulders and waited for Louis to compose himself.

For two minutes from this point on, only Louis' breathing sounds were recorded.

“That's weird. Why is it... I am..., I am supposed to be the First Princess' secret child...”

“I also thought that it was strange.

You were talking with a smug air about something that was unlikely to have any connection with your legitimacy.”

“W-what did you say?”

“The secret son of the First Princess—I already know who it is.

As long as the person himself doesn't come forward, I will carry the secret to my grave.

Perhaps, considering his character, he will not claim his position and birthright.”

Eduart turned his gaze to Elric for a moment.

Elric nodded in a minuscule way.

“I’m sure, no matter who asked him, he will never come forward.”

Louis raised his face.

On his forehead, sweats were forming densely.

“Now then, have you calmed down?

Don’t worry, Louis Ode-Ignitia.

Because there is no doubt that you have the blood of the royal family flowed within you.”

“That’s right. I am a legitimate prince of Ignitia...

I can ride a dragon better than anyone.

My dragons are stronger than any other dragons.

I’m different from that swindling bastard Auguste.”

“The swindling bastard here is you, traitor.”

“Klaus-kun?”

“Nothing. It’s just your imagination. There may have been precedent that chant sounds like a slight curse.”

Klaus shrugged his shoulders, averted his eyes unnaturally, and flipped through his spell cards.

“Well, that’s right. I cannot believe that the ability of His Highness Auguste is fake.

I also used a variety of sensing magic at that time to observe it.”

“Guh...”

“But, suppose that in the unlikely event he was faking it, then he had to have done that with unknown means of deceiving all existing sensing magic.

And, although it is an unlikely story, suppose that he had been removed from inheritance due to his lack of riding ability.

Still, there is the Second Prince, His Highness Jules.”

“Jules is only three years old. He is too young to carry the heavy responsibility as a

King."

"His Majesty Henry is still youthful and healthy. As the day when His Highness Jules enthroned came, don't you think that he would still be young at that time?"

"Wha..."

Louis' breathing became unstable again.

He fell off the chair as if he collapsed and kneeled on the floor.

"That looks painful. Shall I call a doctor?"

"Haah... haah, leave me, alone... You're going to... poison me, right...?"

"I don't care about you, but if you die, Sir Charles would grief.

No, in fact, I do not care about Sir Charles.

To put it the other way, there is no inconvenience even if you are alive. You should live with a peace of mind."

"Fuguguh... , fuuh... , fuuh..."

Eduart looked back and made a sign to Klaus during the gap when Lois hung his head down.

After Klaus confirmed the numerical values that composed the magic circle, he shook his head slightly towards Eduart.

Eduart's expression clouded for a moment.

However, Eduart immediately put on a mask of a calm smile and turned towards Louis.

"I, I am the only one who is thinking for the sake of the Kingdom.

Whether the war mania of Henry is enough to bring peace to Ignitia or not.

Charles' fanaticism is the worst.

He is convinced that the people of the royal family are gods or something.

His tendency to find faults in me, and not once ever deem me acceptable.

His favorite phrase is, '*By the way, those dirty Gigantia ought to be burned down to the ground by the Holy Flame*', and other careless remarks."

"That sounds like what Sir Charles would say.

I will agree that he is crazy.

But, his severity for you is probably his expression of love towards you."

"How foolish. What do you bastards know about that foolish older brother of mine!"

"When we entered Leandez, Charles Ode-Ignitia was the prefect."

Louis who was beginning to become hysterical calmed down.

With a quiet tone of voice, Eduart followed up Eduart's words.

"Eduart was particularly indebted to Charles-senpai."

How nostalgic. 'Dirty Gigantia'—that's still his favorite phrase, huh."

"Elric too, you should meet him again.

If you wait in the chapel, you should be able to see his face three times a day."

"Ahaha, I think I should hold back."

Elric made a troubled expression while making excuses with a smile on his face.

Louis' eyes swum between Eduart and Elric.

"You misunderstood a man named Charles Ode-Ignitia.

Ever since he received a report that you were caught, he went to the chapel everyday and prayed for your rehabilitation.

He also cut off alcohol and meat during the festival, and cut down his sleeping hours.

He's a clumsy man.

Probably not in the form of the kind of favor you want."

Louis kept kneeling and looked up to the air dazedly.

A wave of intense emotions had left, and a deep, quiet regret arose in his expression.

"Aah... why, why did I...

Eduart, please, tell me.

My dragons are... how are Camellia and Silvetica doing now?

Are they still alive?"

"They are still alive.

They can neither fly nor crawl, but they are alive."

"It's because of me... because of me, they are—!"

Camellia, Silvetica, I must apologize to them!

I have done something irreparable...!"

"That's difficult.

They are on the Ichthyes continent.

For the current you, you will not get the permission to travel or visit them."

"I see... that's right...

Why... why, did it end up like this.

They are the dragons that my father had chosen for me...

They are my precious dragons... nevertheless..."

Tears overflowed from Louis' eyes.

He was quietly crying at the beginning, but gradually his sobs changed into a wail.

"My father was telling me to be an able knight who could assist the King.

Even my stepbrother, he said that he would be the one who governs this land, while I would be the one who protect it.

Why did I... say that I would be the King? Said that I would steal the throne?

To leave this southern land, abandoned my job...

And struck Cursed Nails on my precious dragons...!

Impossible... it can't be! Why, why!?"

Louis struck both of his fists against the stone floor.

After several times, his skin was torn, blood was bleeding out from his fists, but he didn't stop.

"Louis Ode-Ignitia, now, can you hear my voice?"

“What, what more... are you going to ask of me...?”

For the first time on that day, Louis gazed straight at Eduart's eyes.
Eduart also stared right back at Louis' teary eyes.

“There was a man.
He was on the same grade as me, but he was not very friendly.
I hate that guy, and that guy should also hate me.
If he was asked of what he knows, he would hardly tell the truth.”

Louis listened to the words of Eduart without interrupting the story.
Elric's expression became dark as he looked down.

“But, there is something definite.”
“What is it?”
“He was never a man who takes care of his family.
Furthermore, he was able to massacre his whole family, something that shouldn't be possible.
Even if it contained infants in it.”
“Massacre... that, perhaps, you're referring to the incident of Lucanrant last year, *that* incident?”

Towards Louis' question, Eduart confirmed it.

“I don't know where he is. And I don't know whether he is alive or dead.
But, Louis, you are still here and alive.”
“Eduart...”
“To be honest, I despise you. In particular, I still hold grudge about Erica's incident.
However, you shouldn't be such a tragic person.
There should be some people trying to manipulate you by taking advantage of your ambitiousness and patriotism.”

Tell me about the one who incited you.

It's not too late yet.

If it's not too late, I'd like you to return to this side."

Eduart stood before Louis who was on his knees and lowered his back.

When they were facing each other at the same eye level across the iron bars, Eduart offered his hand.

Louis tried to grab the offered hand with his trembling hand.

"Eduart... please... , please help me... help me..."

On the verge of touching hands, Louis' hand dropped suddenly.

Louis stood up in a wobbly manner as if he was being pulled up by invisible threads.

"Just kidding~"

A vacant smile showed on Louis' face.

At the sudden change, Eduart and the other two had a wand each at the ready.

"Eduart Aurelia, your delusion is also large, huh.

Help me.

Nevertheless, at the end you were persuaded by my sob story.

Such a cheap play, it will not be popular even in the theater for general public these days."

Louis spread his hands next to his face, and swung his body in a dancing-like movements that made him appear like a jester.

His expression still remained rigid in the shape of a smile that was separated from human beings.

"Oi, Eduart, this is—"

“Klaus-kun, is this a mental manipulation?”

“No. Neither Glam Sight nor Analytical Dweomer reacts.

The other sensing spells are the same.

There is no magic in this room except for the magic that we had cast.”

After he exclaimed that, Klaus put in additional spell cards.

A number of sensing spells were expanded and a more detailed analysis would be added.

However, all of them showed that Louis had not received any mental manipulation.

“Hahaha. Of course.

Did you think that I was a poor victim, who was being manipulated by someone?

That's why, please help me.

What a foolish bunch.

Everything was done by my own will.”

“Louis, you sound as if there are two wills mixed with each other.”

“Hm? What are you talking about?

I was just speaking normally though?

Please help me.”

“Elric, it may be useless, but just in case, please make a Protective Circle.”

“U-understood...!”

Elric cast spells and expanded spell cards to surround Louis.

However, Klaus looked at it and raised a voice to stop him.

“No! Don't use that spell!

Replace the control of the sensing magic, Actorius!”

“Y-yes...!”

Elric abandoned the spell that he was casting, and recast the sensing magic.

The performer of the sensing magic switched to Elric.

After this, the accuracy of the observation result slightly decreased.

Klaus deployed a Protective Circle that differs in detail from Elric's on the whole room.

Louis was looking at the three of them moving about in confusion while smirking.

“Tch! Is it really not mental manipulation?”

“What if we use a spell of mental defense specialization... no, Klaus-kun, continue this way.

Even if only to prevent mental manipulations after this, this is sufficient.”

“As expected, Harvan’s noble son. What an excellent child.

There is no mental manipulation involved in this, I knew this better than anyone else.

Help me.

You are the purest one, the one with the most gaps.

If there is no scary guardian, I will strike you. Help.

Like what I did to Auguste, I will take my time and torment you little by little.”

“You bastard....!”

In response to Klaus' anger, the magical power supplied to the Protective Circle temporarily increased.

Surplus magical power overflowed from the spell cards, it became phosphorescence and was revolving.

Klaus concentrated his consciousness to suppress his emotion and stabilize the magic.

“Things like legitimacy comes later.

It was not because the Founder King Guillaume was loved by God that he became the Conquest King.

It was because he was a conqueror, that there is the legend that he was chosen by God.

I am the same. Someone.

After I become the King of Ignitia, I can create a legend like that.

No matter how underhanded the method to take over the kingship was, it's fine as long as I win."

"You will sell your own country to the enemy country, Gigantia?"

"That's right. Help.

To begin with, even today's Ignitia is allying with enemy countries.

Help me, h e l

The barbarians of Lucanrant, the exclusionists of Harvan.

And the country of madmen, Aurelia."

Klaus noticed something and trembled.

Several factors, including fear and distress, among the recorded Louis' emotional components, had disappeared at some point.

"Good job interfering with my plan, Eduart.

But, you know that clashing with me is a mistake on your part."

Louis lifted his right hand and pointed his finger at Eduart.

"I will predict it, Eduart Aurelia.

Six years after this, your sister—Erica Aurelia will have a horrid death more than anyone else.

At that time, you will be the same as me."

Louis showed a particularly distorted smile.

Suddenly, power faded out of Louis' body and he fell to the floor.

Observation results showed that Louis was completely unconscious.

"Elric, summon Charles and a doctor!

Klaus-kun, cast a powerful dispeller that you know!"

Eduart barked out his orders.

The other two started to move with a snap.

Almost at the same time with Elric ran to the door, Eduart also destroyed the iron bars with Disintegration.

Klaus used Break Enchantment, but there was no change in Louis.

Because Elric had left, the observation by sensing magic had stopped.

The Ignitia's secretary entered in exchange for Elric.

Eduart extracted medical equipment, wand, medicine, etc. from his own bag.

While briefly explaining the situation to the secretary, Eduart examined Louis.

Klaus used Arcane Disjunction.

It became involved in the magic effect, and the recording stopped.

❖❖❖

■ Historia Electrum

Classification type : Ash

Class number : 0006

Date : 1880/07/01

Place : Karkinos · Ignitia's territory <City of Reconquest> , Margrave Ode-Ignitia's residence

❖❖❖

Klaus Harvan was sitting in a simple, small room.

Eduart Aurelia entered the room and locked the door.

Eduart took a seat in front of Klaus across the table.

“What. Eduart, are you also going to record my testimony?”

“Just to be sure. I don't doubt you.”

“What about... well, I don't mind which one it was.

To be honest, I don't know exactly who I meant.”

Klaus shook his head.

Deep wrinkles were engraved between his eyebrows.

“Klaus-kun. I think that it was a much too severe incident for you who is only a 10-years-old to be involved with...”

“While you were talking with Actorius, I have calmed down a bit.

Your concern is unappreciated. To begin with, it feels unpleasant that you are being thoughtful to me.”

“That’s it, I’m hurt.

...Now then, from your perception, how was Louis like?”

“It is as the recording footage said. I don’t know anything except that.”

“I want a frank opinion about what you think.

Perhaps, you might be aware of what I overlooked.

If not, then it is still meaningful to organize known information.”

Eduart put a sealed amber with faintly shining magical characters that looked like a live charcoal—a Historia Electrum on the table.

Klaus looked into the amber for a while and checked the recorded information.

“As expected, there is no trace that he was being manipulated by mental manipulation nor magic.”

“Other than that?”

“The guy who made Louis like that seems to have a befitting evil-like personality.”

“What is your basis to think so?”

Klaus presented the information recorded in the amber to Eduart.

“Some emotional components were much stronger than ordinary humans.

From the beginning of the recording, they should have been almost the same condition as in normal times.”

“What kind of emotions were they?”

“Love, nostalgia, loneliness, regret, and sorrow.

It is similar to the pattern immediately after the death of a close relative.

Considering what Louis did, I also feel that the story didn’t mesh well.”

“It is a sufficient trigger for a person to break alone.”

Klaus thought deeply at the words of Eduart.

Eduart finished checking the record and handed the amber to Klaus again.

Klaus muttered while rolling the amber in his hand.

“When did Louis’ parents died?”

“It was four years ago. Both of them at once.

It was an unfortunate accident.

Charles and Louis wouldn’t have been prepared to do anything.”

“...I see.”

Klaus and Eduart fell silent.

After a while, Klaus opened his mouth to say something.

“However, as four years already passed...”

“Is it unnatural?”

“...How should I know? I have never lost my immediate family.

I merely know about the mental state that can be derived from the combination of the emotional components from a lecture.

I don’t know anything about raw emotions that are not entwined with magic.”

Klaus cut his words and looked at the palm of his hand.

“No, there was a moment when I thought that I have lost an important person.

Although that person was barely saved at the last minute.

If I had lost that person, I—”

Klaus looked at Eduart.

“Right, didn’t Louis say something similar?”

“The prediction... huh...”

“Is Erica okay?”

“If Louis really had something like a precognition ability, it seems to fluctuate so as not let us pick his mistake.”

“That’s true, but...”

Klaus seemed to be full of agony.

Eduart looked at Klaus and shrugged his shoulders.

“To tell the truth, I cannot keep my composure either.

When I heard Louis’ words, I was very frightened that I felt like all the blood in my whole body froze.”

“Even you felt like that, huh.”

“Hahaha, Klaus-kun, what do you think I am?”

Klaus kept silent while supporting a dark expression.

“I am the weak one in my heart.

For this reason, I can imagine how Louis was corrupted.

‘If I were Louis, what is the most painful thing for me?’

And at the same time, *‘what would I do if I my mind broke?’*

“Wait. From the way you said it, it sounds as if Louis’ circumstances were set up by someone.”

“Aah, I believe that it was completely arranged.

Charles who was on bad terms with Louis graduated from the school and returned to his home.

The death of his parents that occurred shortly thereafter, the inheritance of Charles. It was at the same time that the dragons of Auguste were supposed to hatch. At this timing, if one or two uncertain factors occurred at the same time..."

The smile disappeared from Eduart's face and he turned serious. Klaus caught Eduart's challenging gaze head on.

"You, do you laugh when you did too good?"

"I cannot laugh, I cannot laugh at all.

With someone who had corrupt and kill others is on the loose.

...I could have lost my sister at a critical time."

"That's right. Everyone can be in the same position as Louis.

Just a few mistakes in gears will cause destiny to roll in a completely different direction."

Eduart finished his words.

Klaus kept thinking silently.

After a while, Klaus remembered the existence of amber in his hand and put it on the table.

Eduart took the amber from the table and operated it.

The playback of Historia Electrum stopped, the letters on the amber changed to indicate sealing.

Eduart put the amber, and took out two keys from his pocket and placed them in front of Klaus.

"I'm counting on you, so I will entrust this to you."

"What are these keys?"

"The light of stars will gather in one place. When all the lights have disappeared from this world, that star will be the last light... maybe."

"Where is the place?"

“You will know when the time comes.”

“When?”

“For example, when I died and couldn’t protect Erica.”

Klaus stood up kicking the chair.

Eduart made an unfathomable smile on his face.

“Eduart, you...!”

“It’s only in case of an emergency. I will not entrust my precious little sister so easily to you.”

Eduart rose quietly and turned his back to Klaus.

“...Now then, I have kept talking with you this long.

We have to consult with Sir Charles on how to deal with Louis who didn’t wake up like this.”

“Wait, Eduart.”

Eduart who was stopped looked back at him.

Klaus took out one envelope from the inner pocket of his robe.

“Don’t say to anyone that I handed this to you.

It is supposed to only be shown to the people of Harvan.”

“What’s inside?”

“A copy of the spell that I found out when Louis fainted just now.

I couldn’t see the magic that caused his coma.

However, in case of multiple camouflaged magic, most of them could be analyzed.

Look at the name of the performer”

Eduart opened the folded parchment and closed it immediately.

“Cain Grendell... the name of the last King of Cascadia.”

“Don’t say that name in front of the people of the East and North. I cannot guarantee your life.”

“Do you think it’s real?”

“Who knows. Whether it’s genuine or fake, he was supposed to be killed and buried secretly.”

“This, why me?”

“It’s not for your sake. I just don’t want to see the sad face of Erica. So, it’s for my own sake.”

Eduart put the envelope in the inner pocket of his outer jacket carefully.

“Thank you. This will help.”

“Be careful, Eduart.

It seems that the title ‘Lunatic King’ was corresponding to his skills.”

“Klaus-kun, you also need to be sufficiently careful.

The curse on the necklace that lured you siblings to the extremely dangerous place... the performer was also called Cain.”

Klaus opened his eyes wide and glared at the void.

The magical power which swelled up as if being dragged by his shaken emotion became a blue spark and scattered.

“Thank you, Eduart. For telling me this.”

Eduart returned an icy smile to Klaus who looked enraged against the invisible enemy.

Eduart turned his heel and left the room.

The Historia Electrum ended normally.

Side Story 1

Recollection of Eduart Aurelia

Duke of Aurelia spent summer and winter in <Lake Castle>.

Eduart, who came back from Leandez on a winter vacation, stayed in his study as usual.

He sat back and flipped through the pages in a single-seat chair in front of the fireplace.

What he was investigating was the story about the Visitor's Clan.

After finished reading the second book, just as he lifted his face, the sound of knocking echoed suddenly.

When the door opened, there was Erica, Eduart's sister who was 12 years younger than him.

“Oya, is Erica coming over to play?”

“Onii-sama, may I borrow your book?”

“Ah, you can read whatever you want at any time.”

Erica, who was still a five years old, had recently been coming to play in Eduart's study. There were many expensive rare books in the study, but he never needed to worry about Erica because she was a child who never folded books or treated them violently.

“Then, is it okay to borrow this book?”

“Yes, it's fine.”

What Erica took out was an illustrated reference book about magical beasts.

She picked up the heavy book with considerable thickness and brought it to the two-seat chair in front of the fireplace.

Erica always opened difficult books and looked at them intently.

It was fine if she would like to ask something, but perhaps she thought that it was bad time, and looked at it all by herself.

Then, after a little while, she fell asleep before he knew it.

About an hour after Erica's visit, the sound of the firewood burning in the fireplace was dying.

Today she was leaning against the backrest of her chair and started to sleep.

Soft cheeks. Thick golden eyelashes. Half-opened mouth.

Watching such situation of his younger sister, Eduart's cheeks loosened up at her adorableness.

—However, while he thought that Erica resembled their mother, she took after their father although it was not very obvious.

Erica's face looked much like their mother, but her discreet character seemed to be familiar to their father. Erica seemed to think herself as a willful person, but from Eduart's point of view, it was the opposite.

His quiet sister who liked to be lost in her own thoughts and preferred gentle stories, was similar to their careful and quiet father, Ernst.

If so, that was better.

Because, their selfish mother who was lively and unrestrained, and above all else, reckless, was caught by her past obligations and died.

Eduart's face looked exactly like their father in his early years, but his disposition took after their mother.

Their mother who passed away two years ago was a very free and unrestrained person.

Eduart thought that perhaps he also drew her blood deeply. Recently it had become possible to hide his nature with a smile, but his intense temper, which was far from calm, his strength, and his curiosity strongly resembled their mother.

If this went on, perhaps he might also be lured into death like their mother.

Although he was forbidden by his father to explore the cause of his mother's death, this desire surely wouldn't go away from the depths of his heart.

Their uncle's phantom death, hidden by their father that he secretly investigated, their mother's best friend's death or missing incident, and their mother's death. He managed to obtain several clues, but even those were doubtful and he didn't know which one to believe.

“Onii-sama...?”

To the voice of a little girl, Eduart, who had been absorbed in his dark thoughts, returned to his senses.

Erica who had woke up unnoticed was looking at him worriedly.

As Eduart blinked, his face turned into his gentle look like usual.

Right, he had to laugh in a carefree way.

“Ah, Erica. Did you wake up?”

“Yes.....I'm sorry as always.”

“No, you can read as much as you like, and you can sleep anytime.”

“I'm sorry, Onii-sama. I didn't expect to fall asleep after borrowing your precious book.”

“If you have been reading a difficult book all the time, it will be unavoidable for you to become sleepy.”

When you are with me, my heart becomes lighter, Eduart added only in his mind and smiled.

—*If I could, I'd like to lighten your heart, too.*

Erica came to have a nightmare often since two years ago, that was, since their mother died.

Occasionally when she was daydreaming, she often murmured mysterious words.

Normally, it would never show on the outside, but these days...

As expected she was still unstable.

It seemed that she was like that since she started liking difficult books.

Father said that even if she was reincarnated, the memories of the past might have been left intact without being washed away by the river of forgetfulness.

There were incarnation theories in the view of life and death of the Visitor's Clan, and memories of previous life were treated as luxuries.

This condition of Erica was something to be celebrated, not an abomination.

But for whatever reason, Eduart thought that his sister was heavily burdened. Things like past life memories would not bring about too many good memories.

First of all, he would talk about what she was interested in and help her to distract herself.

With such thoughts, Eduart looked into the page of Erica's open book.

"Today you're reading an illustrated book about magical beast. It's a difficult book, do you understand it...?"

"Yes, it's very interesting."

Eduart smiled at Erica's sparkling eyes which were full of curiosity as she answered him. By the way, he also remembered when he was a child that he had no such eyes about magical beast.

"That's good. I also really like this book! What kind of magical beast do you like, Erica? After all, is it the cool unicorn? Or is it a dragon?"

It seemed that girls prefer that horse-like phantom beast, but in this continent dragons' popularity were also high due to Ignitia.

Erica replied after pondering on Eduart's question for a while.

"Well. Unicorns are also nice, but I think I like dragons better."

"As expected, they are rather cool. Then, shall I lend you the complete material about

dragons when you come back next time?"

"Thank you very much, Onii-sama!"

Eduart recalled his friend who was familiar with the dragons. Surely he would be willing to lend him the materials.

Eventually, Eduart and Erica ceased reading books and ended up having a fun conversation about the eidolon.

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The next day, Erica was visiting the study of Eduart again.

Erica was holding a thick book on her usual chaise lounge today.

Eduart looked into it.

"Today is a book about alchemy, are you interested in wands?"

"Yes, Onii-sama."

"After all they used pretty stones, I guess you find it interesting."

"Well. I am more interested in the shaft and core materials."

A page on which various examples of wands were described was opened.

He admired that she understood such difficult things well.

Eduart carefully took out the wands that he could finally make and showed it to Erica.

"When I was a child, I wanted cool things like this wand."

"Ah! Onii-sama, is that the Wand of Urd Sight?"

"Oya, you can recognize it just by looking at it?"

Eduart widened his eyes.

It was a distinctive wand with an elaborate design, but it was not usually distinguishable to a normal 5-years-old child.

In addition to being an extremely expensive and rare wand, it was not really well-known.

It was different from common wands like Wand of Glam Sight.

He was surprised by his younger sister who easily recognized such a wand.

“Yes. It is a wand that cannot be made by an alchemist alone, you will need a mage to make the core material.”

“Yeah, that’s correct. Have you perhaps memorized all the contents of this book?”

“No. Only the parts that I was taught.”

“Heeh, I see.”

“Besides, I only know the wands that are still commonly used.”

“Well then, what about this one?”

“Ah, I do know that one.”

As he asked, Erica would list the type and composition of the wands easily.

Eduart looked at his younger sister speechlessly. It was hard to memorize the composition of over 30 kinds of wands at her age. He wondered if their father was also an excellent and enthusiastic tutor.

At this time, while Eduart had a slightly doubtful feeling, he didn’t dwell on it too much and moved on.

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It was a bright day once again.

On that day too, Erica was visiting Eduart’s study.

“Oya, today is a book about golems. Do you find this field interesting too?”

“Onii-sama, I want to know how to make a golem!”

“You want to make a golem?”

Eduart was surprised at the unusual and aggressive demand of his normally quiet sister.

It was not something cool like a wand, but rather a plain golem. Although it was a useful tool for alchemists, it was unusual for young girls to have an interest in golems.

“Because it looks like a doll and it’s cute... is it not good, Onii-sama?”

“No, it’s fine. Do you know the language for golems?”

“...Y-yes!”

The golem description writing system that currently exists was based on a set of 72 characters.

There were seven systems in its 72 characters, each with seven grammars. In other words, there were forty-nine different description method. It had been subdivided according to its application, such as obfuscated from highly readable grammar suitable for industrial golems and those for beginners.

Therefore, if there was a set of 72 characters, almost any golem could be described.

“First of all, I want to know how much Erica understands, so why don’t you try to describe the process for walking as a test?”

The process for walking was for beginners, and could be described in about five lines.

Erica began writing letters in a notebook that Eduart had opened for her.

She continued writing from the first page to the second page.

Erica wrote the letters longer than Eduart had expected.

“Erica, have you finished writing?”

“Yes, Onii-sama! Is this fine?”

“This is...”

Written in the notebook was the description for walking process using seven grammars in each five systems from seven systems.

In other words, Erica described the walking process in 35 ways.

It was impossible for most children.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know which one is the correct answer.”

“Everything is correct. She wrote 35 ways of the walking process...”

“Onii-sama?”

“N-no, no, I was only slightly surprised... my Erica is amazing.”

“I was taught a lot in my childhood, although I don’t remember well about that time.”

Erica said such a thing while smiling as though she remembered something amusing. At this point Eduart finally noticed. That their father wouldn’t be able to make such thorough education for his daughter. Then, who taught her this? There was only one person beside himself.

Their deceased mother, who had been reputed as a strange person, had secretly gave special education for his gifted younger sister. Perhaps she taught the then one-year-old Erica spoken language and the 72 golem characters at the same time. The same was true for the composition of wands. Perhaps she read books in this study only to reconfirm her knowledge that she had already memorized.

—No matter what, this was that person’s fault. Even when he looked at it, this was not normal.

Eduart couldn’t hide his shock regarding his sister who was receiving a special education that was almost an evil restructuring, but he couldn’t be flustered in front of Erica.

Eduart restrained his complex thoughts greatly and smiled softly at her.

“Yosh! There are many ways to make it, but for a beginner, let’s start from the easiest one.”

Now it was time to make a small golem for Erica as he promised.

Eduart judged that it would be good to check their mother’s works later.

They moved to the desk in the study and started working.

Eduart took out a small fragment of pottery from the drawer and showed it to Erica.

“I will carve the letters on this pottery with an athame knife. Then, after making the shape you like with clay, we will open two holes on it. After that, embed the fragment in one of the holes...”

Erica worked exactly as Eduart suggested.

She used an athame knife made of silver and deftly carved.

Meanwhile, while Eduart picked out a boxed clay which could be used for making golem from his handbag and prepared it on the desk, Erica finished carving the letters accurately.

“Yeah, it feels fine like this.”

“Yes. That’s how we make a person’s shape.”

“Yes, that’s right.”

Erica carefully shaped a simple golem.

She opened one small hole in its chest and one small hole in its belly, as Eduart taught her.

When the golem about the size of the palm was completed, finally the fragments of pottery were embedded in the chest part.

“Next is the blessing, give it a little magical power.”

“Magic?”

“This is a bit difficult. Then, please look over here?”

Eduart blew his breath upon the golem.

The golem moved three steps with stiff movements and stopped immediately.

“Oh!”

“Next, light the fire on this little candle and put it in the hole... like that!”

Eduart used a lamp to light a small candle and put it into the hole of the golem. Then, the little golem started walking on the desk with stiff movements. It was as if it was a living thing, Erica's eyes glittered.

"Amazing! Onii-sama!"

"Golem moves with letters, blessings, and heat. This is the basic, there are various applications, of course."

The golem arrived at the edge of the desk as it was and dropped down. The golem which was made of soft clay became disfigured. When Erica picked it up in a hurry, the candle that was inside it had burned out.

"Does this child cannot think on his own?"

"You cannot incorporate that kind of thing. You can only incorporate a statement or a conditional expression into a golem."

As a matter of fact, if we incorporated artificial spirits by Harvan's technique, it was possible for the golem to imitate thinking.

An artificial spirit was a spirit made by a mage emulating a spirit and enabling artificial thinking and memory, but the manufacture of a golem that incorporated such things was prohibited since hundreds of years ago.

"The danger of making a wrong description increases, and if golems could move while thinking on their own, they would rob people of their jobs."

"Yes, as expected Onii-sama knows everything."

While wrapping the palm-sized broken golem, Erica looked up at Eduart with admiring eyes.

Eduart became a little embarrassed by his sister's gaze.

“No, no, this is normal. Then, will Erica try a bit more trial and error?”

“Well, I will try again just a bit longer!”

“Yes, that’s a good idea.”

Erica looked motivated, she headed to the desk to make another golem.

Eduart left the boxes of clay so that she could use the rest of the material.

It seemed that Erica didn’t immediately start making golem, instead she wrote something like a design with a chalk on a small blackboard. Eduart looked on pleasantly, she seemed to be a serious and cautious sister.

“Onii-sama please go over there! It’s still a secret.”

“Eeh~, but I’m lonely. Then, I will be taking my rest in the chair over there, so please tell me when your golem is completed, okay?”

Saying so, Eduart waited while laying his body down on the chaise lounge.

He didn’t know how much time passed, Eduart was falling asleep before he realized it.

—*Oya, what was I doing?*

Eduart woke up from his nap after a while and looked around the study.

His younger sister who was supposed to be in front of the desk was nowhere in sight.

The two kilograms of clay were all used up.

There were also thirty or more fine china pieces.

—*Did Erica experiment using all of this?*

At that time, a heavy sound like something hitting the ground resounded.

When Eduart looked back, he saw a huge shadow outside the window. It was a golem.

—*A misproduction? No, in order to make it as large as this, it needs to be enlarged purposefully. How did the small Erica make such a thing in a short time?*

The large golem was moving around the labyrinth garden in the back.

It seemed that if a clumsy person made it, it would step through the planting that formed the labyrinth, but that large golem was very agile and nimble.

—It was made properly, and unusually considered every aspect.

While admiring it, Eduart followed that large golem.

On the way, he noticed there were about thirty small golems sitting side by side on the lawn.

“These are...”

The small golems were similar to the golem that Erica produced for the first time, such as the balance of their limbs.

Apparently, Erica first made small golems and used them to make a large golem. It was really well-thought.

Then, where was the maker?

When Eduart wandered his line of sight, a voice came up from the top.

“Eduart-oniisama~!”

“Erica!”

Erica was held on the right hand of the large golem.

Eduart's heart was beating fast. Even he thought that it was dangerous.

“I really want to make a big child, and this thing happened.”

“N-no, it's amazing. But, why don't you come down soon?”

“That, um, it seems there is a mistake in judging the condition in the walking process loop.”

“W-wait a second, Erica!”

She probably made a common beginner's mistake. The large golem that couldn't be

controlled continued to walk slowly. It would fall to the lake if it didn't stop as it was. Immediately, Eduart opened his leather bag and chose a wand.

—Erica would be in a life-threatening danger if he blew the golem away. Then, how about Castling?

Eduart shook the Wand of Castling after picking up the small golem at his feet.

A warm body appeared in his arms.

It seemed that he succeeded in replacing the small golem with Erica.

“Onii-sama, what magic did you use? Ah, was it the Wand of Castling?”

“Yeah, that's right.”

“As expected from Onii-sama.”

Eduart smiled.

He hugged his younger sister who innocently threw admiring gaze at him, while he was thinking that she was the one who was truly amazing. Feeling the warmth of her body, the heart of Eduart finally regained its calm.

“Well, next time you have to manage that child, okay?”

“Yes, Onii-sama.”

Eduart pulled the Wand of Disintegration from the wand holder around his waist.

The head was a regular dodecahedron magnetite, and the shaft material was the axle of the water wheel used for more than ten years.

What was used as the core material was space-compressed twenty liters of aqua regia. The surface of the wand was inscribed with seventeen ancient characters which were now indecipherable.

“Wand of Disintegration? Are you going to destroy that child?”

“It's fine. Trust me. Did you use the charcoal from the fireplace as the heat source?”

“Yes.”

Deep down, Eduart was trembling with fear as he wondered if she also knew about the composition of such a dangerous wand.

“Well, will this works?”

Focusing his mind, Eduart carefully aimed through the back of the golem and cast the magic.

A black ray that disintegrates everything penetrated only the golem’s abdomen and destroyed the charcoal which was the heat source with minimal damage.

The large golem that had lost its power was quickly deprived of heat by the cold air and stopped immediately.

Eduart pulled out the fragment of pottery from the stopped large golem and handed it to Erica.

“Thank you very much, Onii-sama. The Wand of Disintegration, it is very convenient.”

“Yeah. But it’s also a very dangerous wand, so don’t touch it accidentally.”

“Okay, I understand, Onii-sama.”

Eduart smiled while hiding his upset. *‘I will tell this matter secretly to father later. Erica’s action requires attention.’*

—Apparently, this child might be similar to mother.

Even so, he had to make sure that his precious sister wouldn’t end up like their mother or himself. He would put away her works so that at least she wouldn’t follow their mother’s footsteps.

Then, Eduart decided to conceal the trace of their mother which was remaining in Leandez Magic Academy.

Now, questions are answered, but more arise. So, we now knew how Erica was able to spout out the composition of each wand and made the golem.

Ah, before you ask, children have great memory capacity. Children’s recall is 50% accurate for events that happened before age 2 (source) and I guess because Erica’s mother probably kept repeating the information about wands and golem’s language,

they stuck in her memory longer. But, long-term memory only starts to happen on the age of 3, so those information were probably jumbled. So, when Erica is 5 years old, as Eduart said, she read books to reconfirm her memory and place those jumbled information into long-term memory.

Findings indicate that elementary aged children remember a greater amount of accurate details about events than they had reported at a younger age and that 6–9 year old children tend to have verbally accessible memories from very early childhood. This increased ability for children to remember their early years does not start to fade until children reach double digits. By the age of eleven, children exhibit young adult levels of childhood amnesia.

The new questions and plots: what happened to Erica and Eduart's mother? What's with the 'mysterious deaths'? What are their mother's 'past obligations'?



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